



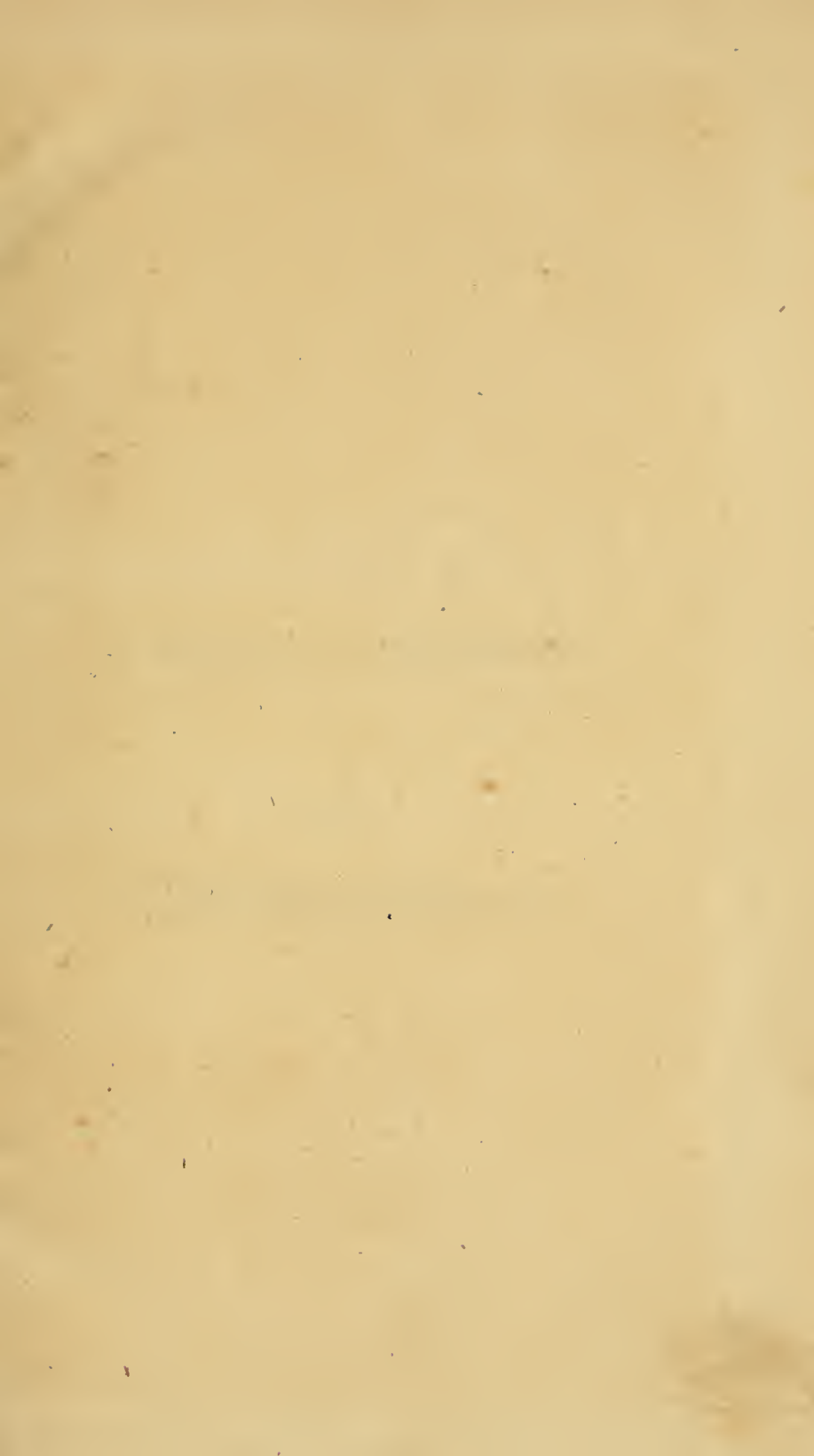
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A DEFENCE OF THE BAPTISTS.

ERRATA.

Page xvi. line 13 from top, for *the* read *these*.

— 144. line 4 from bottom, for *whether* read *whither*.

— 248. line 2 from top, for *drugs* read *dregs*.

A
DEFENCE OF THE BAPTISTS ;

OR THE
Baptism of Believers by Immersion

SHEWN TO BE
THE ONLY BAPTISM
OF
THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

BY GEORGE GIBBS.

“ For as concerning this Sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.”—Acts xxviii. 22.

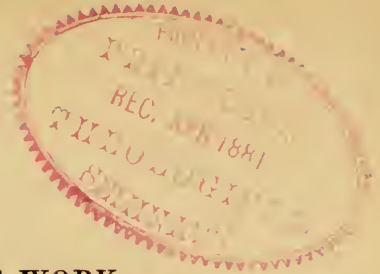
“ I speak as to wise men ; judge ye what I say.”—I Cor. x. 15.

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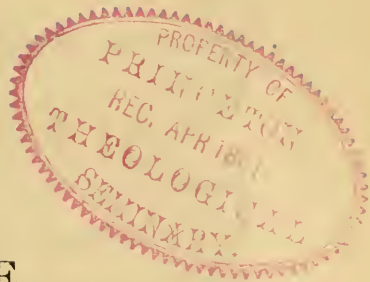
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THE FOLLOWING WORK,
DESIGNED
TO RESCUE FROM REPROACH,
TO VINDICATE FROM MISREPRESENTATION,
AND
TO PERPETUATE IN ITS PRIMITIVE PURITY,
A
SACRED AND IMPORTANT ORDINANCE
OF THE
CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION;
IS, WITH GREAT HUMILITY AND RESPECT,
DEDICATED,
TO
THE ELDERS, DEACONS, AND MEMBERS,
OF
THE BAPTIZED CHURCHES OF CHRIST,
IN GREAT BRITAIN:
BY THEIR FRIEND AND BROTHER,
THE AUTHOR.



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PREFACE.

IT is now nearly eight years since the First Edition of the Defence of the Baptists appeared before the public. The favourable reception it then obtained, as expressed by the rapid sale of the whole impression, and the numerous applications made to the author for a new edition, have induced him to comply with, what he conceives to be the wishes of that body of Christians to which he stands more particularly united by those ties of affection, which naturally arise out of an agreement in sentiment, and a unity of operation in the cause of evangelical truth. The volume which now issues from the press assumes the aspect of a new work, being materially altered with respect to its form and arrangement, and

possessing considerable additions in point of matter.

The first edition, which contained the substance of four sermons delivered prior to the administration of the ordinance of Baptism, was published in the form of a pamphlet, without any divisions excepting those which were necessary to mark the progress of our arguments from one stage of the debate to another. In the present volume the subject has undergone an entire revision, and the various points of the controversy are exhibited to the view of the reader in distinct chapters. The principal additions in this work, which have increased it to twice the size of the former publication, will be found in the second, third, fourth, and fifth chapters, which embrace the leading points in the present controversy. It also appeared to me, in examining the theory of the Pædobaptists, that the moral consequences of their hypothesis had never been sufficiently considered, and that it presented fair and legitimate ground on which we might defend our own principles as Baptists, by pointing out the fatal consequences, which necessarily follow upon any deviation from the primitive simplicity of Gospel

ordinances. The author, therefore, in his inquiry into the origin and moral tendency of Pædobaptism (chap. iv.), has endeavoured to shew, that the universal application of Infant Baptism as a religious rite, and the doctrines which are founded upon it, have tended in no inconsiderable degree to produce that corrupt state of things in the Christian world, which is so deeply deplored by the friends of pure and undefiled religion. The reader will also find a considerable addition made to that department, which embraces an examination of the principal arguments for Infant Baptism, adduced from Jewish proselyte Baptism, and the Abrahamic covenant; in which it is shewn, that the inferences drawn from these two sources are neither natural nor conclusive.

If the author has failed to bring forward new arguments in support of the point in debate, let it be remembered that this subject has been so repeatedly examined by able and experienced controversialists, that there is little scope left for the display of novelty; and the path he pursues has been so completely beaten by the footsteps of those who have preceded him, that there is scarcely a point on which he can stand to tilt a

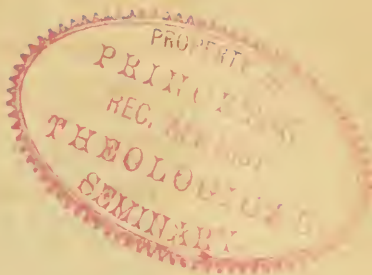
lance that has not been previously occupied by some sturdy champion in the same cause. If, however, in the warmth of his zeal for an important institution (almost sunk into contempt through the corruption of Christianity), he has offended against the spirit or the precepts of that religion which teaches us to bear with the infirmities of the weak, he desires not to shelter himself under the protection of that body, whose principles he defends, and whose patronage he seeks to enjoy. His object in presenting the present edition to the public, is not to excite a contentious spirit about that which some may denominate the mere shibboleth of a party, nor to weaken any bond of charity that unites the church of Christ, but to support a divine institution, by exhibiting it in its primitive purity; and to lead men back to the observance of the ordinances as they were first delivered to the saints.

In the exhibition of the ordinance here defended, as well as in the examination of the theory which stands opposed to it, the writer makes his appeal to the Sacred Scriptures, which he considers to be the only true ground of authority in

controversies of faith and practice ; and it has been his endeavour to temper the feelings and language of controversy with the spirit of that volume to which he appeals, and by the principles of which he has endeavoured to found his reasoning through the whole of this enquiry. If in some passages there appears to be too great a degree of severity in the language employed, it will be found in connexion with sentiments which, from their repugnance to divine truth, merit a more pointed reproof. The confident and overbearing declamations of some men require that they should be met in a style which bears some resemblance to their own ; and the perverseness with which others again pursue a course of reasoning founded upon false premises, and the presumptuous precipitancy of judgment with which they endeavour to establish as true, conclusions which are in their very nature erroneous, demand that they should be exposed, lest the interests of religion suffer through the vain confidence which marks their hasty decisions. In thus exposing what he conceives to be erroneous in the theory of the Pædobaptists, the author has been actuated by no other motive, than an exclusive regard for

the cause of divine truth; and it is with a sincere desire that he may be instrumental in leading the churches of Christ back to THE PRIMITIVE SIMPLICITY OF GOSPEL ORDINANCES, that he now submits this volume to the attention of the public.

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DEFENCE OF THE BAPTISTS.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE NATURE OF BAPTISM.

IN entering upon the defence of our principles as Baptists, we take our stand at the celebrated commission which Christ gave to his apostles:—“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”* Or as it is expressed in the words of Mark:—“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned.”†

* Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

† Mark xvi. 15, 16.

These words, which contain our Lord's commission, were addressed by *him* to his apostles just before he ascended into heaven to take possession of his mediatorial kingdom. They exhibit the nature of his government, the terms of admission into his church, and the very important part his apostles were to take in its establishment, by preaching the gospel among all nations. Jesus had appeared unto them three several times, accompanied by such demonstrations of power as convinced them of his divine authority, and animated them in the prospect of their arduous undertaking; for he furnished them with satisfactory evidence of his resurrection, confirmed their faith in him as the true Messiah, and having delivered to them his final commands, he was received up into heaven.

As our Lord's commission was the authority by which the apostles acted in the affairs of his kingdom, and especially in the formation of the first churches, it ought to be our guide at the present day, since the spirit of it remains *unrepealed*: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount,"* was the command given to Moses the minister of the law; and ministers of the gospel should be equally careful to do all things according to the order of Christ's commission delivered on the mount, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations,

* Heb. viii. 5.

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

By this commission the apostles were authorized to go into all the world to preach the gospel; they were to preach it as the means of converting men to the faith of Christ; they were to baptize *those who believed*, in the name of the sacred Three, and they were to instruct these baptized believers to observe the commandments and ordinances of the Saviour. In the *order* of the commission, and in the manner the apostles executed it, preaching preceded faith, and faith preceded baptism; hence the first churches of the Christian dispensation were composed of baptized believers; nor does it appear that any persons, during the apostolic age, were partakers of baptism and church fellowship except those who professed faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

As the conduct of the apostles in reference to the ordinance which is now the subject of investigation, was regulated by the authority of a positive command, we therefore maintain,

I. That Baptism is a positive duty, founded solely on the authority of a New Testament law, and binding upon those *only* who make a personal profession of faith in Christ, and of repentance of sin towards God.

The duties which Christianity enjoins upon its disciples are classed under two heads; moral and positive. The former arise from the moral relation or fitness of things, and approve themselves to the consciences of all intellectual beings; the latter are founded upon an express command, and derive their obligation from the authority by which they are enforced: such are the two ordinances of the Christian church — baptism and the Lord's supper.

To love God with all our heart and our neighbour as ourselves are moral duties, originating in our relation to God and man; and cannot be violated without dishonouring the divine character and disturbing the laws of social order and happiness: but positive duties have a very different origin—they do not arise from the moral relations of men, nor are they discoverable by the light of reason. Emanating from the sovereign will of the legislator, they must of necessity be revealed before they can be known, and when known, they demand obedience from those only of whom they are required. The authority of moral duties is universal and immutable, while the influence of positive duties is of a particular and temporary nature.

The celebrated Bishop Butler has expressed himself with his usual discrimination on this point. — “Moral precepts,” he observes, “are precepts the reasons of which we see; positive precepts are

precepts the reasons of which we do not see. Moral duties arise out of the nature of the case itself, prior to external command. Positive duties do not arise out of the nature of the case; but from external command: nor would they be duties at all, were it not for such command, received from *him* whose creatures and subjects we are. But the manner in which the nature of the case, or the fact of the relation is made known, this does not denominate any duty either positive or moral. That we be baptized in the name of the Father, is as much a positive duty, as that we be baptized in the name of the Son; because both arise equally from revealed command: though the relation which we stand in to God the Father is made known to us by reason; the relation we stand in to Christ by revelation only. The reason of positive institutions in general, is very obvious: though we should not see the reason why such particular ones are pitched upon, rather than others. Who-soever, therefore, instead of cavilling at words, will attend to the thing itself, may clearly see that positive institutions in general, as distinguished from this or that particular one, have the nature of moral commands: since the reasons of them appear. Farther, positive institutions, I suppose all those which Christianity enjoins, are means to a moral end; and the end must be acknowledged more excellent than the means.

Nor is observance of these institutions any religious obedience at all, or of any value otherwise than as it proceeds from a moral principle. This seems to be the strict logical way of stating and determining this matter.” *

Upon the principles here advanced by one of the most acute reasoners of his day, and which are consonant with every dictate of conscience and common sense, it is evident, that to do justice, and to love mercy, are moral duties binding upon all men: but to offer a lamb of a year old for sacrifice, to circumcise a male child on the eighth day, to dip seven times in the river Jordan, were positive duties; the propriety of which would never have been known without an immediate revelation, and the obligation to perform which rested with those only of whom they were required. The command given to Abraham to take his son, his only son Isaac, and to offer him up for a burnt offering upon Mount Moriah, obliged him to obey that extraordinary injunction. So likewise those precepts of a more general nature which were given to the Israelites, as circumcision and the passover, imposed upon that people the obligation to observe them with fidelity through all their generations. But these laws were not binding upon the surrounding nations lying in heathen darkness, nor did they incur the threatened penalty by not observing them, since

* Anal. of Relig. Part II. Chap. 1.

they were given to the Israelites as the people whom God had chosen, and they were required of those only who worshipped Jehovah the God of Israel. Had an Israelite been asked why he circumcised at all? why he circumcised only his male children? why he circumcised them on the eighth day? — or concerning the passover why he killed a lamb? why he sprinkled the blood upon the posts of his door? why he ate the flesh roasted with fire, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs? he would have answered immediately, “ These are the ordinances which Jehovah hath commanded us to observe through all our generations.”

Upon the introduction of Christianity a new order of things took place, in which the moral purity of the Mosaic dispensation was preserved, while its ceremonial rites were superseded by ordinances less burthensome indeed, but not less obligatory. Baptism is one of these ordinances. It is founded upon the command of God, and cannot be neglected without incurring his displeasure. The law of the case is simple, yet positive: every thing is expressed with clearness, and nothing is left to the judgment or pleasure of the administrator.

As the authority of New Testament ordinances consists in their being instituted by a divine command, so the validity of them depends upon their being administered according to the rules

laid down in the command. To depart from the *terms* of an institution, is to depart from the institution itself, and to administer a rite of our own in the room of that which God has ordained. Had an Israelite presumed to deviate from the rules given respecting the passover — had he chosen to sprinkle the blood upon the floor rather than upon the door posts — to boil the lamb instead of roasting it — to eat it with sweet instead of bitter herbs — he would not have kept the Lord's passover, but a rite of his own; and in so doing he would have incurred the divine displeasure.

In the celebration of the Lord's supper, Christ has ordained that bread and wine should be taken in remembrance of him. Should any society of Christians substitute water for wine, or meat for bread; such a ceremony, though *they* might call it the Lord's supper, would bear no relation to the institution appointed by the Redeemer, nor would it be an ordinance of the New Testament: so likewise Baptism, *to be valid*, must be performed agreeably to the *law* of the institution. The subjects as well as the mode must accord with the precept and practice of the New Testament; to alter either of these is to perform a new rite, and not the one which Christ has ordained.

Had our Lord commanded us to sprinkle infants, it would be our duty to do it, and it would be a direct violation of his law to change

either the mode or the subject: but he has not given such a command, and therefore we reject infant sprinkling as an ordinance of men. To plead for this practice as some do, on the ground that what is not prohibited, is lawful, is to open a wide door indeed for the admission of human inventions into the worship of God. It is by this negative mode of reasoning that Papists defend the use of the wafer, the crucifix, the holy water, &c. &c., and Episcopalians those numerous ceremonies once so burdensome to the consciences of non-conformists. Surely every rite practised in the Christian church should be founded, either upon some express divine command, or upon some recorded apostolic precedent; and what is not supported by a New Testament statute is of men and not of God.

Should it be asked why we baptize at all? why we baptize believers only? why we baptize by immersion? why we receive the baptized into the church to teach them the way of God more perfectly? — we reply, because such is the command of Christ, and such was the practice of the apostles. Ministers are first to preach the gospel — they are then to baptize those who make a credible profession of faith — and they are to instruct those whom they baptize in the doctrines of Christ's kingdom — διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα, teaching them to observe with all diligence and fidelity, the commandments of our

saviour. *Τηρεῖν* signifies to observe with care, or to keep with diligence and fidelity — thus Matt. xxiii. 3. “All therefore whatsoever they bid you *τηρεῖν* observe, *τήρεῖτε καὶ ποιεῖτε*; *that observe, and do.*” See also Matt. xix. 17, and John xv. 10, and xvii. 6, in which places the word signifies to *keep the commandments of God*. When therefore we read that Christ commanded the apostles to teach those whom they baptized to observe his precepts, we naturally conclude that they were capable of understanding and practising the things commanded.

When we consider the decided manner in which the Scriptures speak of believer's baptism, it is surprising that any persons professing to teach Christianity, should be so ignorant or so prejudiced, as to assert, “that the Baptists have not in Scripture either precept, pattern, precedent, or example to rest upon,” and to boast of attempting “*to put them and their system out of the Bible.*”^{*} What is there in our

^{*} In a review of a small tract entitled, “The History of the Baptists by Dr. Robertson,” the reviewer makes the following remarks: “Instead of a review of a different kind, it may probably *entertain* and *instruct* the reader if we endeavour to account for this remarkable fact. And without keeping the reader in suspense, or assigning various causes of this historical document, we will venture to account for it by supposing the true case to be this:—that the Baptist system is an entirely unsupported system; — that it has not for its support so much as one text, pattern, precedent, or example in all the word of God. If this be made evident, as we suppose it may, there will be nothing very surprising in a case of this kind,—that there should be a lapse of more than fifteen centuries of the Christian æra before a single Baptist community makes its appear-

system that is opposed to the purity and honour of religion, that we should be thus threatened

ance in the world. For who can wonder for a moment at the very late commencement of a community *which has not in Scripture either precept, pattern, precedent, or example to rest upon*. To prove our assertion, we shall first of all consider the examples or precedents of scripture relating to baptism. And with respect to these we may safely affirm two things : — First, that there is no example in Scripture in favour of the Baptists.—Secondly, that all the examples in scripture are in favour of those called Pædobaptists.” (See *Evan. Mag. for August, 1814.*)

We are not surprised at the spirit of this review, when we consider the subject it embraces, and the work in which it appeared : but we are surprised that some of the conductors of that magazine had not sagacity enough to perceive its natural bearing upon their own system as Independents. Do they indeed allow that the principles laid down by the reviewer, and the inferences he has drawn from them, are both fair and conclusive? If so, we then ask what becomes of the boasted antiquity of their own church government? For the very principles assumed by the reviewer, for the purpose of overturning the scriptural authority of the Baptist system, will, by a parity of reasoning, when applied to the case of the Independents, destroy the divine right of Independency Itself. To prove our assertion we have only to change the name, the circumstances of the two sects being similar as to the time and manner of their appearance, and we shall then have a similarity of consequences. The reviewer affirms, on the authority of Dr. R.—“that more than fifteen centuries had elapsed before a single Baptist community appeared in the world.” To account for this apparent anomaly in the history of the Christian church, he first supposes, and then boldly asserts, “that the Baptist system has no support from the word of God”—that is, inferring from his mode of reasoning, the appearance of the Baptist churches in the sixteenth century is, either an evidence that their system is not supported by Scripture, or that their system not being supported by Scripture, is the reason why they did not appear before the sixteenth century of the Christian æra.

Now as the Independents themselves did not appear before the close of the sixteenth century, by applying the same mode of reasoning to their system, we shall have precisely the same result. “There will be nothing very surprising *in a case of this kind*, that there should be a lapse of more than fifteen centuries of the Christian æra before a *single Independent community* makes its appearance in the world. For who can wonder for a moment at the very late com-

with expulsion? We preach repentance and remission of sins in the name of the Lord Jesus, for so we are commanded, Luke xxiv. 47. We baptize those who do repent and believe the gospel, agreeably to the injunction in Mark xvi. 16. We baptize them by immersion, because such was

mencement of a community which has not in Scripture either precept, precedent, pattern, or example to rest upon? Here, as in the case of the Baptists, the reader is to infer, that the late appearance of the Independents as a distinct community is either an evidence that their principles are not supported by the word of God, or that their principles not being supported by the Bible, is the reason why they did not appear before the close of the sixteenth century.

Would not our Independent brethren smile at the antagonist who endeavoured to batter down their system with such a feeble train of reasoning as this? And may we not laugh at the arrogance of the man who would attempt to beat us off the field with a weapon which has not point sufficient to pierce the argument of an Independent? When our quondam friends venture to attack us upon this point, they sin against themselves, seeing that they also lie under the same condemnation; and are regarded by the higher powers, as one of those ephemeral sects which sprung out of the turbulent factions of modern times.

What Dr. R. and this reviewer are pleased to call the origin, we consider as only the revival of our community from the long oppression of an Episcopal domination, which first corrupted the doctrines, and then destroyed the constitution and order of our once numerous and flourishing churches. Emancipated from this bondage with the first dawn of the reformation, we immediately recurred to our first principles, and presented to the view of the world a church formed upon the precepts and precedents of the word of God. In direct contradiction to the reviewer and his party, we affirm, that the Baptist system is coeval with Christianity itself: for the apostolic churches were composed of baptized believers; and none were ever admitted to their communion who had not been baptized agreeably to the terms enjoined in our Lord's commission. Mosheim, whose name both as a scholar and an historian carries as much weight as Robertson's, says, when speaking of the Baptists, "The true origin of that sect is hidden in the depths of antiquity; and is, of consequence, extremely difficult to be ascertained." (See *Eccles. Hist.* vol. iv. p. 423.)

the practice of the first administrators of the ordinance; Matt. iii. 6., John iii. 22. 23., Acts viii. 36. 39. And yet our opponents declare that we have neither “precept, pattern, nor example in the Bible for our practice” — in plain language, that there is no command to baptize believers, nor any instance of persons being baptized on a profession of faith in the New Testament. But we ask, did not our Lord command the apostles to baptize those who believed? Did not Peter call upon the Jews who were converted through his ministry to be baptized, and did they not immediately receive this ordinance? Was not Ananias sent with a divine command to Saul, bidding him to arise and be baptized, and did he not immediately obey? If these things are so, (and who can deny them?) what becomes of the charge so confidently brought against us?

Can the Pædobaptists produce such authority for the sprinkling of babes? Can they produce *any* plain testimony from Scripture? *If they can*, why do they not furnish us with one express command, one solitary example in support of this rite? Bishop Burnet, Wall, Fuller, Palmer, and many more Pædobaptists, confess that there is neither precept, rule, nor example in the New Testament for *infant baptism*.* Why then do

* To the authority of the above names, we may add the testimony of Luther, Calvin, Erasmus, Stapferus, the Magdeburg Centuriators, and many of the early English reformers, who all acknowledge the same fact. Thus the reviewer's assertion, that all the examples of Scripture are in favour of Pædobaptism, is abso-

modern Pædobaptists assume this high tone, and accuse us of unscriptural conduct? They must forget, surely, that their practice of sprinkling unconscious babes has been allowed by their own partizans to be without New Testament authority, to be derived from tradition, to be inferred from an Old Testament ordinance, and to be practised on the ground of expediency.

Whatever differences of opinion may exist among the Baptists on *other* points of doctrine, they are all agreed that Baptism is founded upon a positive divine law, and is binding on believers only; and we challenge our opponents to disprove this statement from scriptural testimony: nor are there wanting many in communion with Independent churches, who are compelled to acknowledge that we are right; yet from motives of policy or self-indulgence, they decline to follow the Lord through this despised ordinance. The number of *these dry Baptists*, as they may be called, is by no means inconsiderable; they are to be found in almost all societies of professing Christians, and we not unfrequently hear them vindicate their neglect of an institution which their judgments approve, on the ground that *it is*

lutely denied by the most learned of his own party; who, on the contrary, candidly confess, that they have not in Scripture one precept or pattern for infant baptism. These contradictory opinions shew the great uncertainty which prevails among the different classes of Pædobaptists, respecting the origin of a ceremony to which they attach so much importance.

a non-essential—a ceremony of very minor importance—and that they can be saved without it. To such we reply, that there are no non-essentials in the religion of Jesus; for though baptism is not necessary to salvation, it is essential to that perfect obedience to the will of Christ which recognises his authority in all things; nor can that institution be trivial and unimportant, which is founded on his positive command, and sanctioned by his personal example.

II. In further considering the nature of Christian baptism, we observe that it is an ordinance of initiation.

We do not mean by this expression that Baptism makes a person partaker of those spiritual blessings which accompany regeneration, for he is supposed to be regenerated before he is baptized; nor do we believe that a man is more fit for church-membership after Baptism than he was before, in consequence of his receiving any moral or spiritual qualification by attending to this ordinance: but we believe that it is a rite by which believers publicly profess their renunciation of the world, and their subjection to the authority of Christ; and that all who thus acknowledged him were received into the church in the days of the apostles. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they

continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." *

This was a public authoritative illustration of our Lord's commission. It took place at Jerusalem, when the apostles and disciples were assembled to the number of about one hundred and twenty, and was the act of *that body* whose conduct was to form a precedent of the highest authority to the ministers and churches of Christ in future ages; we therefore inquire what the apostles did with those persons whom they baptized? The Scriptures inform us that they received them into communion with the church. Here, then, we perceive that the Baptism of believers possesses a positive significance, that it has a close relation to the external privileges of the church: but the sprinkling of infants among dissenters, as far as we can ascertain, is attended with neither external nor internal religious benefit. The supposition that any spiritual blessing is conveyed by Baptism, cannot be supported without allowing the popish doctrine of baptismal regeneration: determinately as we reject this hydra-headed dogma of anti-christian superstition, we fear it is more deeply entrenched in the theological system of Pædobaptists than they are willing to confess—and they must pardon us if we suspect them on this ground. How can we do otherwise, when

* See Acts, ii. 41, 42.

we hear so many of them gravely talk of putting their children into covenant by Baptism?

Both the connexion in which Baptism stands in the New Testament, and the order observed by the apostles in administering it, prove that it was not instituted as a mean of conveying grace and salvation, but as a public personal profession of faith in the truths of the Christian religion. Viewed in this light, Baptism appears in its true scriptural character, as an initiatory ordinance, an absolute condition necessary to an authorized admission into the communion of the visible church. Thus while it confers upon its subjects a right to all the privileges of church-fellowship, it lays them under an immediate and lasting obligation to observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded.

Very different are the sentiments of the church of Rome on this point. She, in order to extend her arbitrary dominion over the consciences of men, and to increase the dignity of her priesthood, has ascribed to the two symbolical ordinances of the New Testament, as administered by her own clergy, an efficacy to take away sin—to infuse a new character into the soul—to apply the merits of Christ—and to secure a free admission into the kingdom of heaven. Thus by arrogating to herself a power over the spiritual interests of men, she has founded a dominion in grace more

extensive in its influence, and more permanent in its duration, than any secular kingdom.

Had this disposition to magnify the power of the two sacraments, as they are called, been confined to the church of Rome, it would have been well for the interests of the Reformation: but, unhappily, there are too many among the several Protestant communities who have imbibed her notions respecting the efficacy of Infant Baptism. Now if Baptism has a regenerating influence, it must be derived, either from some virtue in the ordinance itself, or from some special divine appointment to that end, revealed in the Scriptures. The Scriptures, however, teach no such doctrine, neither do they ascribe to this, nor to any other ordinance of the gospel, the least importance, but as it is attended to in the exercise of faith, without which it is impossible to please God.

Viewing Baptism as an initiatory ordinance, by which they who receive it publicly acknowledge themselves the disciples of Christ, and are recognized as such by the church, let us inquire how the case stands in relation to the children of Pædobaptist Dissenters.

The Pædobaptists in England may be divided into three classes, Papists, Episcopalians, and Dissenters, and they all hold Baptism to be an ordinance of initiation.

The church of Rome says: " Sin, whether

contracted by birth from our first parents, or committed of ourselves, by the admirable virtue of this sacrament (Baptism), is remitted and pardoned; by Baptism we are joined and knit to Christ as members to the head; by Baptism we are signed with a character which can never be blotted out of our souls; it opens to every one of us the gate of heaven.”* Dr. Milner, a Popish dignitary, when comparing the church of Rome and the church of England together, in reference to their ordinances, in his letters on the sacraments, says, “Look on the other hand at the Catholic church; you will find the same importance still attached to this sacred rite (Baptism) on the part of the people and the clergy, which is observable in the acts of the apostles, and in the writings of the holy fathers; the former being ever impatient to have their children baptized, the latter equally solicitous to administer in due time, and with the most scrupulous exactness: thus as matters stand now, the two churches are not upon a level with respect to this first and common mean of sanctification—the members of one have a much greater moral certainty of the remission of that sin in which we are all born, and of their having been heretofore actually received into the church of Christ, than the members of the other have.”†

* Catechism of the Council of Trent.

† Letters on the Sacraments, Part ii. p. 53.

Here regeneration, sanctification, union to Christ, and eternal life, are all represented as flowing from Infant Baptism.

The church of England declares, that “by Baptism the subject is made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” This is coming very near to the declaration of the church of Rome. First: the child baptized is said to be made “a member of Christ,” which denotes personal union to the Saviour. Secondly: he is called “a child of God,” and is said to be regenerated. Thirdly: he is styled “an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven,” and all this in virtue of his Baptism. So says the church of England, and so she believes, and in consequence refuses what she is pleased to denominate Christian burial to all children who have not been baptized.

To the same purpose are the sentiments of the late Bishop of Winchester, on the efficacy of Infant Baptism:—“Those who are baptized are immediately translated from the curse of Adam to the grace of Christ; the original guilt which they brought into the world is mystically washed away; and they receive forgiveness of the actual sins which they may themselves have committed; they become reconciled to God, partakers of the Holy Ghost, and heirs of eternal happiness; they acquire a new name, a new hope, a new faith, a new rule of life. This great and wonderful

change in the condition of man is, as it were, a new nature, a new state of existence; and the holy rite by which these invaluable blessings are communicated, is by St. Paul figuratively called regeneration, or new birth.”*

Pædobaptist Dissenters say that *Baptism puts the child into the covenant*: thus good Mr. Henry—“The Gospel contains not only a doctrine, but a covenant; and by Baptism we are brought into that covenant:”† and Mr. Horsey says, “We, being baptized, are regularly admitted into the Christian dispensation.”

Mr. George Clayton says, “Such full assurance of hope have I in the *efficacy of this sacrament* (infant sprinkling), that I doubt not but it will appear, in that day when the secrets of divine operation shall be disclosed, that the seeds and principles of the better life were in some instances infused into the mind at the very hour when baptismal water was externally applied in the name of the Father.”‡

Dr. Williams says, “Was I baptized in infancy? Then have I an additional incentive to gratitude; for from that *early* period has pardon of sin, free salvation, eternal life, with every new covenant blessing, been *sealed* to me.” “I was then added to the church, *that I might be saved*. I was then constituted a visible member of Christ, *that I*

* Bishop Tomline’s Refutation of Calvinism, pp. 83, 84.

† Treatise on Baptism.

‡ Pious Regards, p. 13.

might be conformed to him. I was then put in the way I should go, that, when grown up, *I might not depart from it.* I was then visibly ingrafted into Christ, that I might bring forth much fruit, and thus be found his approved disciple. From a state of distance I was brought near. From a stranger I was made a *fellow-citizen* with the saints, and of the household of God.”*

The same writer observes in another place, when speaking of the benefits and privileges of Infant Baptism—“That it is a benefit to such is apparent, when we consider what Baptism, when applied, necessarily includes. It necessarily includes a relative change of state, *thereby the subject is ministerially translated* † from a state of

* Antipædobaptism Examined, vol. ii. pp. 299—301.

† The Doctor’s opinions respecting the efficacy of Infant Baptism, as stated in the above quotations, fully coincide with those of the church of Rome, and are expressed in terms which the most tenacious of her clergy would fearlessly adopt. We have long suspected that this ceremony, even as administered by Dissenters, was intended to cherish in the minds of the people an undue reverence for the ministers of religion, as men who, from the sacred nature of their office, were capable of communicating spiritual blessings. Our suspicions on this point are confirmed by Dr. Williams’s own statement; from whom we learn, that Pædobaptism in England is precisely the same thing in its effects as it is in Rome: that is, admitting the Doctor’s position, Pædobaptism, whether administered by a Popish bishop or by a dissenting minister, is neither more nor less than the ministerial translation of a child from a state of nature to a state of grace. Here, then, we see at once, whatever others may affirm to the contrary, that protestant Pædobaptism is popish regeneration under a new name. This monstrous notion of translating persons to all the privileges and blessings of the church of

distance to a state of nearness; is separated from the world, and joined to the universal church; is thereby legally entitled to all the other external privileges of the Gospel dispensation of which the subject is capable, this being the rite of initiation to them.”*

If we inquire what these external Gospel privileges are, to which baptized babes have a peculiar and legal right, the Doctor informs us—“ Our children, as the children of the covenant, and baptized, have a peculiar right to the means of conversion. Our infants are entitled to the Bible, and all the contents thereof; add to this, the ministers, the dispensers of this word, are, upon the account of church-membership, theirs, with all their gifts, graces, and labours. Our children, even from infancy, by our principles, are entitled

God, by the ministerial application of sacraments, is the chief prop of that dire dominion which the Romish clergy have acquired over the minds of their deluded votaries; and which has been, wherever its influence extended, fatal to the operations of reason, liberty, and morals. The prevalence of this opinion, in ages less enlightened than the present, gave rise to a custom not less insulting to common sense, than it was degrading to the dignity of religion—that of investing midwives with an ecclesiastical authority to baptize infants immediately they were born, in cases where death was apprehended; the relic of which custom is still to be traced in what is called, at the present time, the half-baptism of the church of England. This practice has been severely censured by many wise and good men of all parties, who have seen the evils which Protestants have brought upon the Reformation, by applying Baptism to the dying infant, as the Papists do their extreme unction, to secure the salvation of the departing soul.

* Antipædobaptism Examined, vol. i. p. 220.

by a covenant right to all those precious emoluments which accrue therefrom." *

So say the Independents—so say the Episcopalians—and so says the church of Rome! They all unite in ascribing grace and salvation to Infant Baptism—they all rally round this ceremony, which is the pillar of Popery and the prop of that stupendous system of will-worship, which has so long opposed the progress of divine truth.

But let us ask, *into what Covenant* are infants introduced by Baptism? *That* which is called in the New Testament, "*The old covenant*" † was external, national, and temporary; it belonged to the Jews and their infant offspring, was a yoke of bondage, and has long since been abolished. *The new covenant* is peculiar to the Christian church, and is that covenant of grace which is "ordered in all things, and sure," with respect to its subjects as well as its blessings; both being chosen and appointed of God himself. *Is this the covenant* into which infants are introduced by Baptism?

Again: *What infants* are brought into this covenant? *Are all?*—this seems to be implied in those cases where all are baptized—or *only* the infants of believing parents? If so, why baptize the children of unbelievers, and give to them the sign and the seal of a covenant to which their parents are avowed strangers? But *are all the in-*

* Antipædobaptism Examined, vol. ii. pp. 324, 325.

† See Heb. viii. 13.

fants of believers in the covenant? If this is contended for, and their right to Baptism inferred from thence, how does this correspond with after circumstances?

Again: *How come they into this covenant?* Is it by natural descent, as the offspring of believing parents? Are they born in it, as the children of the Jews were born in the Abrahamic covenant? *If so*, do we not maintain that persons are Christians by natural generation—a position at awful variance with the testimony of divine revelation, which declares, that *every child of Adam* is conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity; and says of the *true children* of the covenant, that “*they are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*”

Or, are they actually put into this covenant by Baptism? Do the few drops of water sprinkled upon the face of the child, bring him into covenant-relation with God? We read* that it is the prerogative of God himself to enter into covenant with his people; but upon this principle it is made to be the work of man: or does the Holy Ghost introduce the child into this covenant when he is sprinkled? *In how many instances*, then, does he forsake the work of his own hand, and leave the *covenant infant* an everlasting stranger to covenant blessings!

Again, as admission into this covenant neces-

* Heb. viii. 8.

sarily supposes the enjoyment of certain privileges, let us inquire, what are the peculiar benefits resulting to the children of Pædobaptist Dissenters by virtue of their Baptism? Those who were baptized by the apostles were admitted to the privileges of the church. Does this consequence follow the Baptism of infants by Dissenters? Certainly not. Are they holier than other children—are their understandings more enlightened, their wills better regulated, their affections more sanctified? The many awful instances of degeneracy and depravity in children who have been duly baptized in infancy loudly answer, No! Do Pædobaptist Dissenters receive any into their communion upon the mere circumstance of their having been baptized in infancy? Does any man plead his Baptism when an infant, as a sufficient ground for his admission to the communion of the saints?

By the church of Rome, and by the church of England, baptized infants are declared to be members of those communities, and have an undisputed right to all church privileges; this is rational, and accords with the professed principle that Baptism regenerates its subject; hence confirmation, church-membership, a pious death, a Christian burial, and an assumed glorious resurrection, all follow upon Baptism as the procuring cause: but what external or internal benefit do the children of dissenting parents enjoy by Bap-

tism, and *what is the nature of that covenant* into which they are said to be introduced?

We come, then, to the unavoidable conclusion, that Pædobaptist Dissenters, to be consistent with themselves, ought to admit infants to communion; indeed, there are many of them who feel the force of our statement, that to consider children proper subjects for Baptism, and to deny that they are fit for church-membership, is a paradox not to be reconciled upon the principles of reason or revelation.

If we look back to the earliest ages of the Christian church, we shall find that Baptism and the Lord's supper were concomitant ordinances; that the persons who received the former were always admitted to the latter—and in after times, when Infant Baptism crept into the church, the great patrons of that unscriptural rite, Cyprian, Jerom, Austin, and Pope Innocent, were strenuous for infant communion, because they saw that both ordinances were equally important; and that if infants were fit subjects for the one, they were worthy partakers of the other. This conviction actually led to infant communion, which prevailed in the Latin church during several centuries, and is practised in the Greek church to the present day; and it ought certainly to be observed in every church that admits of Infant Baptism, for are not the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's supper commanded by the same

authority—are they not of the same religious importance—are they not the standing institutions of the Gospel system, and equally required of those who enter into the visible church?

If infants are really, *as it is said they are*, taken into covenant by Baptism, *why not* bring them to the Lord's table? If it be replied, that by reason of their tender age they cannot discern the Lord's body, nor partake of the elements in remembrance of him, *this very objection we make to their being baptized*; they cannot exercise faith and repentance, which are required of all who receive Baptism, and without which no one has a right to the ordinance. "He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved." "*If thou believest* with all thine heart thou mayest." "*Repent* and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus." Yet Baptism is administered to infants, notwithstanding that they are devoid of its pre-requisite qualifications; why then hesitate to administer to them the supper of the Lord, merely because they are incapable of perceiving the nature and design of that institution?

Our Independent brethren surely do not suppose that infants possess either a greater intellectual capacity, or a higher moral fitness to receive the one ordinance than they do to partake of the other; or that Christ has so constituted the two symbolical rites of the New Testament, that Baptism may be received by those who are wholly

ignorant of its nature and design, while the supper must only be partaken of by such as have their understandings exercised to discern both good and evil. That one or the other of these suppositions is involved in their system is, I think, fairly deducible from their present practice, which has no support either from the principles of the Old Testament economy, the examples of the apostolic churches, or the practice of the first Pædobaptists.

Baptism and the Lord's supper are the two visible ordinances of the covenant of grace. The whole church of God has a right to these two ordinances, and is bound in duty to observe them. That which belongs to the whole church, by the same right belongs to every member of it, and cannot be withheld but by a direct violation of the divine order and constitution of things. If then, upon the avowed principles of our Independent brethren, infants are actually taken into covenant with God, and constituted members of the visible church by Baptism, we ask, by what authority do they act towards them, in reference to the two ordinances of the Christian dispensation, as the Popish clergy do towards their laity with respect to the two elementary parts of the Lord's supper — give the one, and withhold the other?

Let them assign some scriptural reason for bringing a child to the baptismal font, and not to

the table; if they cannot, they must excuse us for placing their ceremony, as Pædobaptists, among the corruptions of the church of Rome.

The learned Mr. James Peirce, in his masterly Essay on Infant Communion, has incontestibly proved, from the writings of Cyprian, Augustin, Theodorus Mopsuestenus, Isidorus Pelusiota, and Theodorit, that it was the general practice of the first Pædobaptist churches to give the supper to their baptized infants: and having thus established the antiquity of the custom, he proceeds to shew the propriety of it in connexion with the practice of Infant Baptism at the present day. His words are:—"The Baptism and communion of infants stand upon the same foot; and therefore they who admit the one ought to admit the other also. For the confirming of this argument I will shew, First: That the same reasons that are brought for Infant Baptism, are in like manner applicable to Infant communion. Secondly: That the objections against infant communion will admit of the same answers as those against Infant Baptism." In the train of reasoning which this learned writer pursues under the first of these positions, he observes;—"It is urged, that Baptism is a seal of the covenant; and nothing can be more proper than to apply the seal of the covenant to those to whom the covenant itself does belong. But then I desire to know, whether the Lord's supper is not a seal

of the same covenant ? And if their part in the covenant will infer their right to one seal of it, why not to the other ? There is great need here of some very nice distinction ; or I cannot see how we shall be able to urge the same argument, when it is brought to prove their right to receive one ordinance, and answer it when it is urged to prove their right to partake of the other.”*

The time must come when Pædobaptist Dissenters will see the absurdity of their system, and when they will either explode Infant Baptism, or introduce infant communion ; by this means alone can they give the appearance of consistency to a practice which in its present form is as destitute of foundation in reason, as of support from divine revelation.

In taking a review of this part of our subject, we cannot help concluding, that the charge so frequently brought against us “ of making Baptism a saving ordinance,” attaches with greater justice to those who affirm —“ that Baptism puts the child into covenant with God ; unites it to the church that it might be saved ; constitutes it a visible member of Christ ; gives it a legal title to read the Bible, to all the contents of that sacred volume, and to all the means of conversion.” If this is not joining issue with the church of Rome in making Infant Baptism essential to sal-

* Essay on the Ancient Practice of giving the Eucharist to Children.

vation, then we are free to confess, that we do not understand the meaning of terms, and shall feel thankful to be informed where lies the distinction between “a child’s being joined and knit to Christ as a member to the head by the admirable virtue of baptismal water,” as maintained by the Popish clergy, and “a child’s being ingrafted into Christ and made a visible member of him by Baptism,” as affirmed by Dr. Williams and believed by many of the Pædobaptist Dissenters.

So far from maintaining that the ordinance of Baptism has either a regenerating or a saving influence, we regard it as appointed *expressly and exclusively* for those who have been regenerated and brought into the covenant of grace by the previous operations of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts; and we enjoin the observance of it upon such persons only, not as a mean of salvation, but as a practical evidence of their faith in the truths of the Christian revelation, their subjection to the authority of Christ, and their devotedness to the service of God. When they have thus publicly put on the Lord Jesus Christ according to his command, we receive them into the church, admit them to the table of the Lord, and to all the other privileges of the household of faith, according to the example set us by the apostles, and the practice of the first church.*

* Acts ii. 37. 47.

But in the practice of the Independents, this order, so clearly laid down in the word of God, is entirely passed over. With them Baptism stands alone ; it has no connexion with other parts of the Christian system ; for it neither introduces its subjects to the Lord's supper, nor confers upon them any one privilege which unbaptized children do not enjoy to an equal extent, and by a right quite as legitimate. How often does it occur, that the person who in his infancy was said " to be ingrafted into Christ, made a member of his church, and legally entitled to all the privileges of the covenant of grace, by his Baptism," is never recognized by the church, nor admitted to participate in any of its distinctive benefits. Is such a practice analogous to any thing in the Bible ? Does it accord with any scriptural or rational view of the new covenant ? Did the Hebrew church thus treat their children ? Can this order of things have originated with Christ and his apostles ? Our appeal is to wise men ; let them judge what we say : we most decidedly answer in the negative ; and therefore reject Infant Baptism as an invention of men, an innovation, which, in its nature and tendency, is as much opposed to the principles of dissent, as it is to the spirit and letter of the Christian revelation.

III. We shall consider the perpetuity of Bap-

tism as an ordinance of the Christian church. As Baptists we have not only to defend the ordinance of Baptism from those innovations which by changing the primitive mode and subject, have changed its nature and design ; but, strange to say, we have now to contend for the *perpetuity* of an ordinance which has been recognized, in the practice of the whole Christian church, for nearly two thousand years ! Perhaps this is only one of the first fruits of that temporizing spirit which would amalgamate the world with the church, and, under the mask of liberality and charity, sacrifice the doctrines and ordinances of the Gospel to the carnal objections and prejudices of fashionable professors.

Is there any thing in the word of God which renders the perpetuity of this institution doubtful ? Is there any thing in the institution itself inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, and which pleads for its abolition ? Is the church invested with a discretionary power to rescind at pleasure a doctrine or commandment which may be deemed obsolete ? Is the ordinance so completely a *non-essential*, that the neglect of it involves no guilt and merits no reproof ? Can it be said that the ends and objects of Baptism are not the same at all times and throughout all ages ? To these inquiries we answer in the negative, and we declare, that so far from finding any thing in the ordinance itself, or in the word

of God to justify its discontinuance, we are furnished from those very sources with the most convincing evidence of its high authority and lasting obligation.

It is principally objected against the perpetuity of Baptism, that it was instituted as a local and temporary rite on the first promulgation of the gospel, in order to distinguish those who had come over from Judaism or idolatry to the faith of Christ; and that, being merely an ordinance of proselytism, it was not intended by its Divine Founder to be perpetuated from age to age with the Christian dispensation: this is an assertion without proof; mere conjecture, unsupported by evidence deduced from the oracles of God; a principle of assumption by which the truth and permanency of the whole Gospel system might be assailed with as much force as any one of its peculiar doctrines.

Is it rational to conclude, that our Lord would have introduced an institution of such short duration to the notice of the apostles, in the solemn and dignified language of the text? “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth: go ye therefore and teach all nations, *baptizing them* in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you even

unto the end of the world. Amen." Had Baptism been instituted as a "local and temporary rite," would Christ have connected it with the general promulgation of the Gospel? Would *he* have made a "local and temporary rite" a prominent part of a permanent system? Would he have given to it so distinguished a place in a dispensation which was to be published among all nations to the end of time? Why did he promise to be with his ministers to the end of the world, to encourage them in the administration of an ordinance, that was not designed to be as extensive and permanent as the system of which it makes so conspicuous a part?

May we not rather believe, that, had Christ intended Baptism to be nothing more than "a local rite," he would have explained this circumstance to his apostles, and that *they* would have made known, to the first ministers and churches, his mind on this subject? And would not *some* of those churches at least, have ceased the practice, had they understood from apostolic authority that it was only a "temporary ordinance?" But in direct opposition to all this, the command was clearly given by Christ; it was constantly practised by the apostles; and it has continued in the Christian church, without interruption, down to the present time. These are powerful evidences in support of the *perpetuity* of Believers' Baptism.

We may further observe, that the perpetuity of this ordinance is founded upon the *continued authority* of our Lord's commission. I presume it will be admitted on all sides, that when a law enforces the observance of two or more duties, *except* there be some command to the contrary, it enjoins the performance of each, and renders the fulfilment of the one as indispensable as the other: now in the apostolic commission there are *three things* enjoined — preaching, baptizing, and teaching, in the faithful discharge of which duties, the divine influence is promised to the end of the world. Why then is Baptism to be discontinued, while preaching and teaching are still observed as essential parts of the Christian system?

To obtain satisfaction on this important subject we shall notice a few particulars connected with our Lord's commission. First: It was given by Christ when he was invested with all power in heaven and in earth, and when he was about to ascend to the right hand of God; certainly implying that it was not to be superseded by any authority among men. Secondly: It was given to the apostles as the chief ministers of Christ, but *not to them exclusively*, for we find others acting upon it who were not apostles; — Philip the deacon, the disciples who were scattered abroad upon the persecution which arose about Stephen, and Silas, who preached and

baptized in company with Paul at Philippi: by all which it is evident that the commission was understood to be a general rule for all whom the Holy Spirit might call to the work of the ministry, whether apostles, evangelists, pastors, or teachers. Thirdly: The commission strictly enjoins preaching, baptizing, and teaching; placing them on one equal footing. Fourthly: As the *duties* of the commission were not exclusively attached to the apostolic office, so neither was the *continuance* of the commission itself confined to the apostolic age: this is manifest from the promise of Christ, “Lo, I am with you alway, *even* to the end of the world.” The words are *ἕως τῆς συντελείας του αἰῶνος*. “*Even until the end of time.*” Now had Christ intended to restrict his commission to the apostolic age, would he not have expressed himself *so definitely* that the precise period of its termination might have been known? That the words signify “*to the end of time*” will appear from other places where they occur. (*Matt.* xiii. 39.) “The harvest, *συντελεία του αἰῶνος ἐστίν*” is the end of the world.” (*Verse* 40.) “So shall it be *ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ του αἰῶνος τουτου* in the end of this world.” (*Verse* 49.) “So shall it be *ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ του αἰῶνος*” at the end of the world.” (*Matt.* xxiv. 3.) “What shall be the sign of the coming, *καὶ τῆς συντελείας του αἰῶνος*; and of the end of the world.” Fifthly: There is nothing in the commission that renders one part of more doubtful

authority than another: whatever argument is adduced against the continuance of one of the injunctions, must equally affect the rest; for they all stand or fall together. *If Baptism* is to be discontinued, so must preaching and teaching, for they were ordained at the same time, by the same divine legislator, and in precisely the same form; and therefore to reject Baptism is to invalidate the whole commission, and to leave the church of Christ without any authority for the publication of the Gospel. Sixthly: The connection between Faith, Baptism, and Salvation, maintained in the commission, strongly implies that Baptism was not instituted as a “local or temporary ordinance;” for the hope of salvation by faith was professed by all the primitive converts, and *was a prerequisite to their Baptism*: nor do we hesitate to affirm, that, if indeed Baptism can be proved to have been only “local and temporary,” then the obligation to believe the Gospel was binding only on those who lived in the apostolic age, and salvation itself is a temporary and local blessing. Seventhly: Neither can the Baptism enjoined in our Lord’s commission refer to that divine influence, called elsewhere the Baptism of the Holy Ghost; which, contrary to the plain testimony and strict analogy of Scripture, some have affirmed. The apostles, to whom the command was given to preach and to baptize, were not to enter upon the

execution of their office until they were endued with the Holy Spirit; thereby shewing that the commission was to be fulfilled under his immediate agency. “And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.”* “And being assembled together with them, he commanded them that they would not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”† “Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”‡ “The same is he who shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.”§

These latter words were spoken by John the Baptist, when baptizing some who were afterward apostles. They contain a remarkable prediction of the increase of Messiah's kingdom, of the institution of the apostolic office, and of the gift of the Holy Ghost; and they are applied by our Lord himself to the day of Pentecost, when the apostles were as completely immersed in the

* Luke xxiv. 48, 49.

† Acts, i. 4, 5.

‡ Acts, i. 8.

§ Matt. iii. 11.

Holy Spirit, as the body is immersed in water at Baptism; they were overwhelmed with his glorious presence and influences, which filled the house where they were assembled. Dr. Campbell, though a Pædobaptist, very properly renders the words of John, “He will baptize you *in* the Holy Spirit and fire;” and this agrees with the circumstances of the fact as recorded by Luke.* “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

This miraculous communication of the Holy Ghost, figuratively styled a Baptism, relates to Christ as the administrator, and to the apostles as the subjects; and we do not find the inspired writers describing the extraordinary operations of the Spirit as a Baptism, except in a figurative sense.

Again, in opposition to the notion that the Baptism specified in our Lord’s commission signifies the Baptism of the Spirit, we observe, that the apostles on the day of Pentecost went forth and preached, *baptizing in water* three thousand who were converted to Christ; that *they* certainly understood the Baptism in the commission to mean

* See Acts, ii. 2, 3, 4.

Water Baptism, and did accordingly *immerse their converts in water*; that they exhorted all who heard them to believe in the Lord Jesus, and to he *baptized in water* for the remission of sins; * that they *even baptized in water* those who had previously received the Holy Ghost; † that they continued to preach and to baptize to the end of their days; and that when they departed, they left their successors acting on the commission as on a statute which was in full vigour. These facts clearly shew that *they* considered the reception of the Holy Ghost and of Water Baptism to be two distinct things; and that the possession of the former to any degree, did by no means destroy the obligation to attend to the latter. “When Paul was filled with the Holy Ghost, he arose and was baptized.” ‡

Besides which, did the apostles ever profess to baptize in the Holy Ghost? Did they ever insinuate that they had power to bestow the Spirit—and must they not have possessed that power, if the Baptism they were commanded to administer referred to the communication of divine influence? Have they in their Epistles, in which they have largely treated on the work of the Spirit, represented this work, in any of its forms, as the Baptism enjoined by Christ? If Water Baptism was not intended in the commission, how came the

* Acts, ii. 37. 42. viii. 12. xxxv. 40.

† Acts, x. 44. 48.

‡ Acts, ix. 17, 18.

apostles to practise it, in connection with the other duties enjoined? Why did they baptize in water the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, and especially, why baptize those who had already received the Holy Ghost? In a word, *if the Baptism* commanded by our Lord *is not to be understood literally*, then were the apostles the first broachers of an error which promises to run parallel with the progress of Christianity in our world!

But the nature of the ordinance strongly pleads in behalf of its perpetuity. If it be admitted, as in fact it is, by the church of Christ, that external ordinances are not incompatible with the spirit of Christianity, then I know of no institution so fit to be the accompaniment of faith, and the distinctive mark of a Christian profession, as Baptism. It is both significant and impressive; it accords with the great end of our religion, to separate men from the world and to bring them into fellowship with God; it is a solemn act of divine worship; a public recognition of the Lord Jesus in his office of Prophet, Priest, and King in Zion; it is an open avowal of our belief in that great mystery of the Gospel, the Trinity of equal persons in the Unity of the Godhead. And shall this instructive rite be restricted to proselytes from Judaism and idolatry? Shall we take away from any member of Christ's kingdom that moral motive to propriety and holiness of conduct which is so forcibly urged by the apostle, "Shall *we*

continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall *we* who are dead to sin live any longer therein? Know ye not that *so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ*, were baptized into his death? *Therefore* we are buried with him by Baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, *even so we also should walk in newness of life.*"*

There are other consequences which result from making Baptism an ordinance of proselytism. A line of distinction would be thereby drawn between one class of professors and another; plainly implying that those who come over from idolatry are less likely to be sincere, and are therefore required to submit to a severer test than others: upon this plan the laws of Christ would be unequal in their operations, and partial in their exactments, and that equality in the moral condition of all men, which the Scriptures so decidedly maintain, would itself be rendered doubtful. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."†

But again, the perpetuity of Believers' Baptism is proved by the intimate relation it sustains to the most important and permanent truths of the

* Gal. iii. 26, 27, 28.

† Rom. vi. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Christian dispensation. “There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all.” * Here the doctrine of Baptism stands like one of the seven pillars, which are the strength and glory of the Christian fabric. Here it is presented to our view in connection with truths which must constitute essential parts of Christianity, as long as Christianity shall exist. Here it is adduced as a powerful motive to unity among the brethren. For there is “*one body*,” or church, which comprehends all the elect: there is “*one spirit*” that animates this body by his sacred influences, and by whom all its members are called to be partakers of the glory of Christ: there is “*one hope*” of this calling which is common to the whole: there is “*one Lord*,” even Jesus, who is the head of the body, the church, and to whom every member is required to render worship and obedience: there is “*one faith*,” one great rule and doctrine of faith, the Gospel of the ever-blessed God: there is “*one Baptism*,” designed to accompany the profession of this faith as the outward sign: and there is “*one God and Father of all*, who is above all and through all”—the supreme ruler and disposer of men and things, “who is in all” that believe, by his vital energies and grace, to afford them strength and consolation.

* Eph. iv. 5, 6.

It is the opinion of some that this passage refers to the Baptism of the Spirit, and *not* to Baptism in its literal sense; it will be difficult, however, to *prove this*, so long as it remains upon record that the apostles and primitive ministers did actually baptize their converts, and that all who entered the church in those times did enter it by Baptism: besides, it may be strongly argued, that the apostle is here enumerating several distinct propositions, each of which constitutes a first principle of the Christian profession—that he had just before adverted to the divine influence and ministry of the Holy Ghost in the church, “there is one body and one spirit,” which would render a recurrence of the subject unnecessary—that the *order* in which Baptism stands is opposed to such an interpretation, for it succeeds to faith, “one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;” and if faith be an *effect* of the Spirit’s agency, Baptism certainly cannot refer to that divine influence by which faith is produced, since this would be to place the cause after the effect. Besides, the supposition that this Baptism refers to the influences of the Spirit, induces one or more of the following consequences:—Either, 1, that if Water Baptism was not laid aside in the days of the Apostles, it was not to continue after their decease; or, 2, that this rite, so positively enjoined by our Lord upon all who believe in his name, was in the estimation of the Apostle of such minor importance, as not to

deserve a distinct enumeration among the first principles of the oracles of God; or, 3, that the Apostle had been guilty of an omission in mentioning but *one* Baptism, when in fact there were *two*, one of water, and another of the Spirit, alike applicable to all believers. On a close examination, however, of the New Testament, I think it will not be found that the ordinary influences of the Spirit are ever called Baptism; and *that* interpretation of the sacred text which is opposed to the general analogy of the Scriptures, and which tends moreover to weaken the authority of a divine law, must be suspicious. When, therefore, we hear the Apostle say that there is “one Baptism,” when we know that he administered Water Baptism, and that he drew thence the most powerful moral motives to holiness of life, what can we suppose the Ephesians understood by the expression, “one Baptism,” except that solemn ordinance which Jesus Christ instituted, when he said, “Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen?”

CHAPTER II.

ON THE MODE OF BAPTISM.

WHENEVER errors exist either in faith or practice, they will be found to originate, not in the paucity or obscurity of our Lord's commands, but in the predominance of certain principles which bias the mind in its inquiry after truth. The prevailing cause of mistakes in religion, is the want of an impartial investigation of the Scriptures; they are not allowed to speak their own language; they are not treated as infallible guides, with a sincere intention of abiding by their decision. How many peruse them fettered by educational prejudices, being determined to find evidence in support of their own theory, and in justification of their own practice! Hence that violence which has been offered to the sacred text, and that palpable disregard to the natural order, and plain signification of words, which is manifest in so many expositors.

No passage in the New Testament appears more obvious in its meaning, than that on which

we ground our authority for the practice of Believers' Baptism; yet none has been more perverted by the reasonings of disputatious theologians. What can be more intelligible than the statement given by the Inspired Penmen, respecting our Lord's commission to his Apostles? What can be more manifest than that Faith and Baptism are the unalterable terms of admission into the visible kingdom of Christ? What can be more evident than that the Apostles were required to preach, and to baptize all who believed in their word, whether brought from under the veil of Judaism, the iron bondage of idolatry, or the influence of that more refined, but not less destructive degeneracy, under which so many millions are to be found, in what are called, Christian countries? *All* have sinned and come short of the glory of God, therefore all must be born again, and saved, if saved, precisely through the same medium, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. To all is this proclamation to be made, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." —The question then arises, what is that baptism which is required of all who believe in Christ, and how ought it to be administered?

We maintain that Baptism signifies immersion, and that *immersion alone* is consistent with the nature and design of the ordinance, with the will of its divine founder, and with the practice of the Apostles. This we shall endeavour to prove,

I. From the signification of the word.

Baptism is a Greek word, and therefore we must refer to Greek writers for its proper meaning. It is formed from βαπτισμος, a verbal noun, derived from the perfect passive βεβαπτισμαι, from the verb βαπτίζω, to immerse, a derivative from βαπτω to dip, or to dye by dipping, from βαπω, an obsolete verb, to dip, plunge, or overwhelm: — or according to the learned Mr. John Harmar, “from βαω, eo, to go, to go down, to enter into, and πιπτω or πετω, cado, to fall, sink, or descend into. Qui mergitur it in aquam cadendo, he who is baptized goes into the water by descending, or sinking under it. Hinc βαπτίζειν, aqua tingere, Anglice, to plunge into water, to baptize, id est leviter immergere, that is, lightly to immerse.”*

That the verbs βαπτω and βαπτίζω are not generic terms, denoting the application of water *in any way*, but that they are confined to the specific mode, dipping, may be proved by a reference to their use in the works of classical Greek writers, who certainly understood their own language better than any other in later times; and the Pædobaptist cannot cite one authority from these writers in defence of *his* explanation of the terms. To argue that “it is not necessary that the *biblical* sense of the words should be the same as the *classical*, or that which is commonly found in profane writers,”

* Lexi. Etymo. Græc. affix. ad Scap. Lexi.

is to acknowledge a want of support from those authorities, and to attempt to nullify that mass of evidence to which the highest importance would have been attached, had it been as strong on the side of our opponents as it is on ours.

Neither is it probable, that the writers of the New Testament, who used the popular language of the day, and wrote as much for the instruction of Greeks as Jews, would have employed the terms in a sense contrary to their etymological and usual signification. A native of Corinth, of Athens, or of Ephesus, would understand the words βαπτω and βαπτίζω when used by the inspired penmen, as having precisely the same meaning that they have in the writings of their own countrymen ; and in point of fact, the Greek Christians *did so understand the terms*, for they constantly administered the ordinance of baptism by *immersion*.

Every competent and impartial judge will admit, that the true signification of a Greek word must be determined by its current use among Greek authors, especially when that use of the word is supported by the universal consent of the most distinguished scholiasts and grammarians. If we examine these authorities with respect to the genuine meaning of the words in dispute, we shall find, that their testimony is decidedly in favour of the Baptists, since they

invariably apply them, in their native signification, to the act of dipping or plunging into water or some other fluid. In proof of this we need only refer to the numerous examples which have been so frequently adduced in this controversy.

Suidas: *Βαπτίζω*, Mergo, Immergo, Tingo, Intingo, Madefacio, Lavo, Abluo, Purgo. To dip, to dip into, to make wet, to wash, to bathe, to purify.

Stephanus: *Βαπτω*, Mergo, Immergo, item Tingo, quod fit immergendo, to dip, to immerse, also to dye, which is performed by dipping. — ¶ Lavo, *πλυνω*, to bathe, to wash by plunging into water. (*Πλυνω* propriè vestes sordidas) properly signifies to wash dirty garments, which is done by soaking them in water. — ¶ Inficio, to stain; Fuco, to colour; Imbuo, to steep or imbue.

Βαψις: Tinctio, Ipse tingendi aut mergendi actus, — a dying, or the act of dying or dipping.

Βαπτίζω: Mergo, seu Immergo, ut quæ tingendi aut abluendi gratia aquæ immergimus, to dip, or immerse, as we dip or immerse in water those things which are to be washed or dyed. ¶ Mergo, Submergo, Obruo aqua, to plunge into, to plunge under, to overwhelm in water. ¶ Abluo, Lavo, to wash, to bathe.

Βαπτισμος: Mersio, Lotio, Ipse mergendi, item

lavendi, seu abluendi actus, the act of immersion, bathing, or washing.

Βαπτιστήριον : Lavacrum, a baptistery, a bath, or place for washing.

Scapula : Βαπτω, Mergo, Immergo, to dip, to dip into, or immerse. — Item Tingo, quod fit immergendo, also to dye, which is performed by dipping.

Βαπτίζω : Mergo, seu Immergo, to dip, to immerse. — Item Tingo : ut quæ tingendi, aut abluendi gratia aquæ immerginus ; also to dye, because we immerse those things in water which are to be dyed or washed. — Item Mergo, Submergo, Obruo aquæ, to dip under, to overwhelm in water.

Βαπτίζωμαι : Mergor, Submergor, to be immersed, to be put under water, to be baptized.

Βαπτισμος et βαπτισμα : Mersio, Lotio, Ablutio, ipse immergendi, item lavandi seu abluendi actus.

Suicerus : Βαπτω signifies to dip, to dye by dipping, hence he is said βαπτειν υδριαν to dip the bucket, who draws water out of a well or river, which cannot be done unless the whole bucket is immersed under water. Wool and garments when dyed are said βαπτεσθαι to be baptized or dipped, because they are entirely immersed in the dying-vat, that they may imbibe the co-

lour; βαπτίζω has very properly the same signification in the best writers.

Βαπτισμα vel βαπτισμος, properly signifies an immersion, a dipping, or dying. Hence βαπτισμα is used in the same sense as καταδυσις, which is to plunge over head and ears: see Apostolical Canons, can. 50. where three immersions are called, τρια βαπτισματα μιας μνησεως, three baptisms in one mystery or initiation. On which Canon Zonaras observes, page 50. τρια βαπτισματα ενταυδατας τρεις καταδυσις φησιν ο κανον εν μια μνησει ητοι ενευ βαπτισματι, the Canon in this place, calls three baptisms, or plungings, three immersions in one initiation, that is one baptism.

Βαπτιστηριον; the place where Baptism was administered; the pool or bath in which the baptized were immersed; called κολυμβηθρα*, a bath for swimming or washing. †

Parkhurst, βαπτίζω from βαπτω to dip, immerse, or plunge in water. The Seventy use βαπτίζομαι (mid.) for washing oneself by immersion, answering to the Hebrew טבל 2 Kings, v. 14. comp. v. 10. Thus also it is applied in

* A bath for swimming or washing. So Josephus applies the word in the remarkable story of Herod the Great drowning the young High Priest Aristobulus. Antiq. lib. 15. cap. 3. sect. 3. So also de Bel. Jud. lib. 1. cap. 22. sect. 2. See also Bishop Pearce's Miracles of Jesus vindicated, part 4. page 63. Occ. John v. 2, 4, 7. also ix. 7, 11. Vide Parkhurst Lexi. sub. voc.

† Thesaurus Suiceri, tom. 1. p. 622.

the apocryphal books; see Judith xii. 7. and Ecclus. xxxiv. 25. Figuratively, to be baptized, or plunged in a flood or sea, as it were, of grievous afflictions and sufferings.

Schleusner: βαπτω, Mergo, Immergo, Tingo, Intingo, Imbuo, to dip, to dip into, to dye, to dip in dye, to imbue, to soak.

Βαπτίζω; proprie, Immergo, ac Intingo, in aquam mergo; properly it signifies to immerse, to dye, to dip in water. It is derived from βαπτω to dip, and agrees in its signification with the Hebrew word טָבַל which is to dip, (2 Kings, v. 14.) in Ver. Alexand.; and with טָבַץ to suffocate or drown in water in Ver. Symmac. (Psal. lxviii. 5.) and again (Psal. ix. 6.) In this sense it never occurs in the New Testament, though it is frequently met with in Greek writers.

Βαπτισμα: Baptism, proprie, Immersio, Intinctio in aquam, Lotio, properly signifies an immersion, a dipping in water, a washing. Hence transferred to that sacred rite which, for distinction, is called Baptism, because the baptized were, formerly, totally immersed in water.*

Dr. Jones: Βαπτίζω; I plunge, plunge in water, dip, baptize, John iv. 2.; plunge in sleep, bury, overwhelm, Eum. 15.; initiate into a knowledge of the Gospel, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.; plunge in

* Lex. in Nov. Test. sub. voc.

air or wind, purify, iii. 11.; plunge in fire, consume or purify with fire.

Βαπτίζομαι : I am plunged, Polyb. iii. 72-4. ; am baptized. I plunge myself in sin, wallow in, &c.

Βαπτισμαί : Immersion, Baptism, Plunging in affliction.*

Deylingius : The word *βαπτίζεσθαι* as used by Greek authors signifies to immerse and overwhelm. Thus we read in Plutarch de Superstit. tom. ii. op. *f.* *βαπτισον σεαυτον εις θαλασσαν* dip yourself in the sea : like as Naaman in 2 Kings v. 14. who baptized himself seven times in Jordan ; which was an immersion of the whole body. So also Strabo, lib. 14. page 458. when speaking of the soldiers of Alexander the Great, marching during the winter between Climax, a mountain in Pamphilia, and the sea, says : They were immersed *βαπτιζομενους* up to the waist. The same author, lib. 12. page 391., speaking of Tatta, a marsh, situated between Galatia and Cappadocia, says : The water rises *παντι τω βαπτισθεντι εις* so as to baptize or overwhelm every thing. Diodorus Siculus, lib. 1. cap. 36., when speaking of the Nile overflowing its banks, says : Many of the land animals perish, *υπο του ποταμου περιληφθεντα διαφθειρεσθαι βαπτιζομενα* being overtaken and baptized or overwhelmed by the flood. In Josephus Antiq. Jud. lib. 15. cap. 3. *βαπτιζοντες*, persons

* Jones' Gr. & Eng. Lexic.

baptizing, are persons plunging down. It has the same signification in the Gospels, and in the writings of the Apostles, if you except Luke ii. 38. *

Grotius : In his annotations on Matt. iii. 6. says : “ That Baptism was accustomed to be performed by immersion, and not by perfusion, is evident, both from the meaning of the word, from the places chosen for the administration of this rite, (John iii. 23. Acts viii. 38.) and from the many allusions of the Apostles, which cannot refer to sprinkling. Rom. vi. 3, 4. Col. ii. 12. The custom of pouring or sprinkling appears to have been resorted to some time later, in favour of those, who lying dangerously ill, desired to dedicate themselves to Christ ; these were called Clinics by the rest. (See Cyprian’s Epistle to Magnus.) Nor ought we to wonder that the ancient Latins used *Tingere* for *Baptizare* since the Latin word *Tingo* properly and generally signifies the same as *Mergo*, which is to dip.” †

The celebrated Vossius, the most admired critic of his age, says : βαπτω and βαπτίζω are rendered by *Mergo*, and *Mergito*, and *Tingo*, yet they properly signify *Mergo*, to plunge under water, and *Tingo*, to dye, only by a metalepsis ;

* Deylingii Observa. Sacra, pars 3. Obser. 26.

† Vide Annota. in loc.

for dying follows immersion, and is that which takes place when the thing is dipped. ‡

‡ Etymo in voce Baptismus. This decision of the learned Vossius in favour of immersion, has given considerable offence to some of the modern advocates for infant sprinkling, and to no one more, than the late Dr. E. Williams; who, in opposition to the united testimony of the most distinguished scholars, affirms:—"That the word *Tingo*, which corresponds with the primary meaning of baptize, is a GENERIC TERM, that is, the radical, primary, proper meaning of it is, not any specific act, as to immerse, to sprinkle, or the like; but to effect the purpose, or to produce a state of being dyed, stained, wetted, &c. by any way whatever, as may best answer the end in view." In order to support this assertion, he produces a few passages from the Latin poets, where the word occurs, which he thus translates: "*infected; sparingly imbue; anointed; to stain; being wetted, or touched; to cool: dyed in, or tinged with, &c.*" It is by this novel system of criticism the Dr. labours to establish, as a fundamental principle in the defence of his hypothesis, the following monstrous position:—*That βαπτίζω is a term so general, equivocal, and obscure, that it has puzzled and perplexed the wise and the learned in every age to find out its true meaning.* If this, indeed, be the true state of the case, the ministers of Christ are left in a sad dilemma with respect to the COMMISSION, and may, with the wondering disciples of old, exclaim: "What meaneth this of which he speaketh? We do not comprehend it!" Well they may not, since the term in which the command is given is so ambiguous, that it has posed all the critics in the world to find out its "*proper, primary, radical, etymological meaning.*" Thus left to wander in the mazes of conjecture, and to jump to a conclusion, right, or wrong, we may fancy the disciples going forth on the authority of their Lord, "*infecting, sparingly imbuing, anointing, staining, touching, wetting, or cooling* the nations they were commissioned to baptize; employing, amidst the great uncertainty of the case, any one of these ceremonies "*as the means of effecting a purpose by any way whatever, as may best answer the end in view.*" For who can suppose, that these good men should be able to find out the determinate nature of an indeterminate command, or that they should ascertain the true meaning of a term which has foiled the learned doctors of modern times.

But is it a fact, that Jesus Christ has employed a term of doubtful interpretation as the basis of a positive divine ordinance? Our opponent affirms it;—and to prove his affirmation, he pursues the

These men, not less distinguished for their critical knowledge of the Greek language, than

very same course for which he condemns the Baptists, i. e. "An appeal to heathen authors for the signification of a New Testament sacramental term." We do not dispute his right to such an appeal; but we very much doubt his wisdom in resting the strength of a critical hypothesis upon a few examples drawn from a class of writers who, amidst the excursions of genius, seldom restrict themselves to the etymological use of terms. The question with us, is not, whether *Tingo* be the primary correspondent word with βαπτίζω, for here the great mass of authorities have decided against the Dr.—nor what are the various senses in which authors have used the term:—but whether Christ has committed himself, by instituting an ordinance in language so equivocal, and obscure, that his disciples are incapable of ascertaining his real intention? This is the point; and a most important one it is, as involving a question which affects, in no inconsiderable degree, both the legislative character of the Redeemer, and the sufficiency of his gospel to guide us into the knowledge of the will of God. The assumption of such a position is little less than a libel upon his wisdom. What, shall we be told that our Lord has delivered to his church an ordinance of the most solemn kind, without the least respect whatever to the manner of its observance?—that he commands the obedience of his disciples to a law, which contains no specific act, as the rule of that obedience, and the test by which its genuineness is to be tried?—or that he is so entirely indifferent to the mode of administering an instituted rite, that he has left it to the will of his followers to perform it any way they please? Desperate indeed must be that cause which seeks an expedient in principles which are only fit to be enrolled in the creeds of Socinians and Papists. "Poetry," says a sensible Pædobaptist writer, "may admit liberties of expression; but law requires words and phrases of the most ascertained and unequivocal sense." That which is, here, affirmed to be necessary to law, in general, will be found to be true in reference to the laws of God in particular. They stand clothed with the explicit and commanding language of divine authority; and they clearly define the nature of the act required, as well as the manner in which it is to be performed to meet the intention of the enactor. To affirm the contrary of this, respecting any one New Testament command, is, either, to impeach the legislative wisdom of Christ, or, to induce a belief that the command in which this anomaly is to be found, is an interpolation; the only refuge which the Dr.'s

for their attachment to Pædobaptist principles, affirm that the primary and true meaning of the

hypothesis presents to its followers of escaping the vortex of Socinianism; a result not contemplated by the great advocate for Pædobaptism, but to which the position he assumes naturally leads. The want of perspicuity in the construction of laws is a grand legislative delinquency, imputable, either to ignorance, inadvertency, or design, on the part of those who frame them. Shall this charge, then, be brought against the Redeemer in constituting the fundamental law of his kingdom? If so, where is his superior wisdom; and what becomes of his authority as a lawgiver? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

It is remarkable, that the Dr.'s fondness for hypothesis did not lead him to apply his principles of criticism to the enacting term in the law of circumcision. Did he decline the experiment because he was afraid thus to trifle with the stern authoritative language of the Hebrew Legislator? or because he perceived that the consequences of such an application would have been ruinous to the peculiar species of reasoning by which he was labouring to uphold the tottering theory of infant sprinkling? The critic who had sagacity enough to discover a *supposed* verbal defect in the construction of a New Testament law, ought to have had either honesty, or perseverance sufficient to have ascertained, whether a similar delinquency was discoverable in an Old Testament rite, and not to have left the question at that point from which the reader is led to infer, that Christ as a lawgiver has displayed less wisdom than Moses; and that the institutes of the gospel are more difficult of comprehension than the precepts of the law. That this, however, is not the case, we shall show, by proving, that the same ambiguity attaches to the law of circumcision, which our opponent professes to have discovered in the law of baptism, and if the one is of uncertain import on the ground of its various meanings, the other is not less so, since it admits of as many applications as he has affixed to the word *Tingo*. The terms *כָּלַךְ* and *כָּלַח*, which are employed to denote the act of circumcising, and their correlatives *Circumcido*, and *Excido*, signify, to cut, to make an incision, to chop, to break; —To cut, chop, or break off; to cut off entirely, to pluck up by the roots, to rase or destroy; —to divide, to break in pieces, and to pare any thing all round, as a tree is barked.

Had the Hebrew Fathers been as deeply tinctured with the spirit of criticism as our opponent appears to have been, they might have found in the generic form of the words *כָּלַךְ* and *כָּלַח* matter sufficient

words βαπτω and βαπτίζω is Mergo, to dip or plunge, Immergo, to dip or plunge into, Submergo, to plunge under water : and that the ancient Latins rendered them by Tingo and Intingo, to dye, only in a secondary sense, as expressing the consequence of dipping. Are we not, therefore, justified in concluding, that could these writers have discovered, either, in the original construction of the words, or, in the use of them by Greek authors, a fair and direct reference to the acts of pouring and sprinkling, they would have given it ; and should we not then have been told, that they also signify Fundo, Affundo, Spargo, Aspergo. But in no one instance are these latter significa-

for the exercise of their argumentative powers ; and we should then probably have heard of three distinct modes of circumcising, typically corresponding, in their degrees, with dipping, pouring, and sprinkling, i. e. some who were for a total amputation ; others who were for removing only half of the virile membrum ; and a third class who were satisfied with making a slight incision ; thus performing the operation “ *by anyway whatever as might best answer the end in view.*” The Jews shewed, either more sagacity in discovering, or, more fidelity in observing the act enjoined in the law of circumcision, than Christians have done in reference to Christ’s command to baptize. They considered the enacting term in the law of circumcision, though applicable to other purposes, as expressing a specific act, and understood it agreeably to its most obvious and current signification.

The cause of that deviation from the primitive mode of baptizing, which has been so prevalent in latter ages, must be sought for among the corruptions of Christianity, and not in the ambiguity of a New Testament legislative enactment : and that critical hypothesis which would make Christ the author of the strife and contention which has divided his church on this point, is in our estimation not less anti-christian, than is the rite itself which the learned Dr. laboured to uphold.

tions affixed to the words, which clearly shews that the Greek language does not afford one example where the words, under consideration, occur to denote the act of sprinkling as their legitimate signification.

In addition to the united testimony of the most eminent philologists, the authorities derived from the Greek classics are decidedly in favour of immersion; but, that, which more directly establishes the legitimacy of our mode, is, the sense in which the Greek fathers used the terms when describing the ordinance of Baptism as administered in their days. The Greeks were among the first gentiles who embraced Christianity: their states formed the grand field of the Apostolic mission; and their cities the seats of those churches which, in their primitive constitution, exhibited models of Gospel faith and practice. Moreover, unto them, chiefly, were committed the lively oracles of the New Testament, which being written in their native tongue, and constantly read in the midst of their assemblies, afforded them the fullest opportunity of understanding their meaning: besides which, where debates arose upon any one point that appeared ambiguous, they could at once appeal to the infallible decision of inspired apostolic men. Under such circumstances, it is natural to conclude, that the tenacity with which the Greek church has, for so many ages, adhered to immer-

sion, as the only proper mode of Baptism is founded on the true signification of the original words as understood by the first Greek Christians, and the many practical illustrations of this ordinance as set before them, when administered by the Apostles. We are, moreover, supported in this conclusion by the consideration, that the Latin Church, for the space of twelve centuries, universally practised baptismal immersion except in the cases of the Clinici; and, that the Anglican church, in the laws which she established for the due administration of her sacraments and ceremonies, has commanded that the child should be warily and discreetly dipped thrice: from which it is evident, that there was at one time a perfect conformity of opinion on this point between the Western and the Eastern churches, and that both administered Baptism by immersion as most agreeable to the primitive institution and design of the ordinance.

Let the Greeks speak for themselves, and they will tell us: Το βαπτίζεσθαι και καταδυεσθαι ειτα ανανευειν της εις αδου καταβασεως εστι συμβολον, και της εκειθεν ανοδου· διο και ταφον το βαπτισμα ο Παυλος καλει λεγων, Συνεταφημεν ουν αυτω δια του βαπτισματος εις τον θανατον. To be baptized and plunged into water, and then to arise out of it again, is a symbol of our descent into the grave and of our ascent out of it. And, therefore, Paul calls Baptism a burial, saying, "We are buried with him by Baptism

into death." Chrysost. Homil. 40. in 1 Ep. ad Corinth.

Ἦμων καθαπερ εν τινι ταφῳ, τῷ ὕδατι καταδυνοντων τας κεφαλας, ὁ παλαιος ανθρωπος βαπτεται και καταδυς κατω κρυπτεται ὁλος καθαπαξ. When we immerse the head in water, as in any sepulchre, the old man is buried, and the lower parts being immersed, the whole body is concealed. Idem in John, cap. 3. ver. 5.

Εν τρισι ταις καταδυσεσι και ισαριθμοις ταις επι—κλησεσι το μεγα μυστηριον του βαπτισματος τελειονται ινα και ὁ του θανατου τυπος εξεικονισθη και τη παραδοσει της θεογνωσιας τας φυχας φωτισθωσιν οἱ βαπτιζομενοι. The great mystery of Baptism is accomplished by three immersions, and as many invocations; and thus the emblem of death is represented, and those who are baptized have their minds purified by the communication of divine knowledge. Basil. M. de Spirit. Sanct. cap. 15. t. 2. pa. 177.

Συνταφωμεν Χριστῳ δια του βαπτισματος, ινα και συνανασωμεν· συγκατελθωμεν ινα, και συννυθωμεν· συνανελθωμεν, ινα και συνδοξαθωμεν· We are buried with Christ by Baptism and thus we rise with him; we descend with him that we may be lifted up with him; we ascend with him that we may be also glorified with him. Greg. Nazianzeni Orat. 40. p. 642.

Ὁ βαπτισθεις συνθαπτεται τῷ Χριστῳ, δια των τριων καταδυσεων την τριημερον ταφην του Κυριου σχηματιζων, και αποθνησκων οσον γε κατα τον παλαιον και ἁμαρτητικον ανθρωπον· Whoever is baptized is buried with Christ: by three immersions is represented the

Lord's three days' burial, and dying as to the old and sinful man. Theophylact, Ad Coloss. cap. 2. ver. 12.

Το βαπτισμα εν τρισι καταδυσεσι τελειται. Baptism is performed by three immersions. Idem in cap. 8. Marci.

Τυπτος του θανατου του Χριστου εστι το βαπτισμα· δια γαρ των τριων καταδυσεων, τας τρεις ημερας της του Κυριου ταφης σημαινει το βαπτισμα. Baptism is an emblem of the death of Christ; for by three immersions, Baptism represents the three days' burial of our Lord. Damascenus, Orthod. Fid. lib. 4. cap. 10.

Κατερχεται μεν ο βαπτιζομενος υπευθυνος αμαρτηματων· ανερχεται δε ελευθερωθεις της αμαρτιας. He who is baptized descends, into the water, subject to sin; but he arises out of it freed from sin." In Actis Concilii Nicæni 1. parte 2. p. 173.

Δια της εν τω υδατι καταδυσεως τε και αναδυσεως, τριπλης τε επικλυσεως, την τριημερον ταφην και την ανασιν αυτου του Χριστου εξεικονιζομεν. By immersion in water, and emersion out of it, a triple overwhelming, we represent the three days' burial and the resurrection of Christ himself. Germanus Constantinop. in Hist. Eccles. p. 146.

Αι τρεις καταδυσεις και αναδυσεις του βαπτισματος, θανατον και ανασιν σημαινουσι. Trine immersion and emersion in Baptism, shadows forth our death and resurrection. Photius apud Oecumenium in cap. 6. ad Rom. Vide etiam Constitut. Apostol. lib. 3. c. 17.

This word also occurs in the Septuagint, or ancient Greek version of the Old Testament, where it is used in a ceremonial and sacramental sense, and we shall now proceed to shew that it has precisely the same signification in these writings that it has in the Greek classics.

The verb βαπτω is used in the Septuagint about eighteen times ; in fourteen of these instances it is rendered to dip in the English version ; once to plunge, (Job ix. 31.) once to put into water, (Lev. xi. 32.) and twice to wet, (Dan. iv. 33. v. 21.) In the two last places our translators have not kept up the force of the Greek word βαφει, nor of the Chaldee word יִצְטַבֵּעַ, both of which signify to immerse, to soak, or thoroughly imbue. These words are here used in a figurative, and not in a literal sense ; yet their primary idea is preserved in the circumstance to which they refer ; for had Nebuchadnezzar's body been baptized in water, he could not have been more completely drenched, than he was by being surrounded with, and enveloped in the dews to which he was exposed.*

* The word Baptize doth certainly signify *immersion*, *absolute* and *total immersion*, in Josephus, and other Greek writers. But this word is in some degree equivocal ; and there are some eminent Greek scholars who have asserted that immersion is not necessarily included in Baptism. The examples produced, however, do not exactly serve the cause of those who think that a few drops of water sprinkled on the forehead of a child constitute the essence of Baptism. In the Septuagint it is said, that Nebuchadnezzar was baptized with the dew of heaven : and in a poem attributed to Homer, called, The Battle of Frogs and Mice, it is said that a lake was baptized with the blood of a wounded combatant. Εβαπττεο δ' αμα τι λιμνη πορφυρεω A question has arisen, in what sense the word

We learn from the book of Judges that Gideon wrung a bowl-full of water from the fleece which he had exposed all night to the dew. The *copiousness* of the dews in the East is described by travellers as being so great that any body exposed to their influence would be as completely wet as if immersed under water : Shaw says "The dews, particularly as we have the heavens only for our covering, would frequently *wet us to the skin*." And Niebuhr remarks, "In the most sandy tracts near the sea, the dews are singularly copious ; but notwithstanding the humidity, the air is so pure that the inhabitants sleep abroad : I never slept sounder than when I found my bed *all wet with dew* in the morning."

Baptize can be used in this passage. Doth it signify immersion properly so called? Certainly not : neither can it signify a partial sprinkling. A body wholly surrounded with a mist ; wholly made humid with dew ; or a piece of water so tinged with and discoloured by blood, that if it had been a solid body and dipped into it, it could not have received a more sanguine appearance, is a very different thing from that partial application which in modern times is supposed sufficient to constitute full and explicit Baptism. The accommodation of the word *baptism* to the instances we have referred to is not unnatural, though highly metaphorical ; and may be resolved into a trope or figure of speech, in which though the primary idea is maintained, yet the mode of expression is altered : and the word itself is to be understood rather allusively than really ; rather relatively than absolutely. If a body had been baptized or immersed, it could not have been more wet than Nebuchadnezzar's ; if a lake had been dipped in blood, it could not have put on a more bloody appearance. Hitherto the Anti-Pædobaptists seem to have had the best of the argument, on the mode of administering the ordinance. The most explicit authorities are on their side. Their opponents have chiefly availed themselves of inferences, analogy, and doubtful construction."—*Monthly Review for May, 1784. p. 396.*

The verb βαπτίζω occurs but twice in the Septuagint; first, in 2 Kings, v. 14, “Then went he down, και ἐβαπτισατο εν τῷ Ιορδανῇ and *dipped himself* in Jordan,” as our translators have very properly rendered it. Some have contended, in order to weaken the force of the original word, that Naaman was commanded *to wash himself*; very true, but we ask in *what way* would it be most natural for him to wash himself with a view to be cleansed from so loathsome a disease as the leprosy — by *sprinkling* himself, by *pouring water* on himself, or by *dipping* himself seven times in Jordan, according to the prophet’s direction? And there can be no valid objection against this mode, that it would be inconvenient for want of change of raiment, because it appears that Naaman travelled with a considerable wardrobe. *

Again, we find it in Isaiah xxi. 4.; the clause which our translators have rendered “*fearfulness affrighted me*,” is in the Septuagint και ἡ ανομία με βαπτίζει, “and iniquity baptizes me,” evidently meaning that a man’s sins overwhelm, and entirely cover him, and not that they merely sprinkle him!

We shall now proceed to examine, in a few instances, the signification of the words as they stand in the New Testament. The verb βαπτω is used three times; first, in Luke xvi. 24; in

* See 2 Kings, v. 22, 23.

this parable, it must of necessity signify to dip, and our translators have so rendered it, “ Send Lazarus that βαψῇ he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue.” Again, in John xiii. 26. our Lord, describing him who should betray Him, says, “ He it is to whom I shall give a sop βαψας having dipped it; and ἐμβαψας having dipped it, he gave it to Judas.” In Rev. xix. 13. the word undoubtedly means to dip; “ And he was clothed with a vesture βεβαμμενον dipped, or dyed, in blood.” Whether this garment were emblematical of Christ’s sufferings for the sins of his people, or of the dreadful slaughter of his enemies in his final triumph over them, the figure is alike expressive of the extent of *His* sufferings, or of the overwhelming nature of *their* overthrow.

According to Stephanus the verb βαπτίζω occurs more than seventy times in the New Testament, in reference to this ordinance. We shall notice the following passages as confirming the meaning for which we contend; Mat. iii. 5, 6. — “ Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and εβαπτίζοντο εν τῷ Ιορδανῇ υπ’ αυτου were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins:” see also the parallel passage, Mark i. 5. In both of these places, the phrase has the same signification, allowing for the different inflection of the verb, as in 2 Kings v. 14. which our translators have render-

ed to dip. Mark i. 9. — “ And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and βαπτισθη was baptized of John εις in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water,” &c. The account here given of this ceremony abundantly supports that sense of the word for which we contend. Jesus is said to have been baptized or immersed *in the river*, and to have *come up out of the water*; this mode of expression would surely not have been adopted, had he stood at the brink of the river, and had John only sprinkled or poured water upon him. This however the great body of learned Pædobaptists themselves concede, for they confess that our *Lord was immersed in the river Jordan* — we believe so too, and we consider his example as defining and illustrating the precise mode of that Baptism which he afterwards instituted in his church.

But it is contended by some, and those principally Independents, that the verb βαπτίζω signifies to *sprinkle* as well as to immerse; and that sprinkling was not only *a mode*, but probably *the mode* of primitive Baptism. Let us then see how the use of the word *sprinkle*, in those passages where our translators have retained *baptize*, agrees with the sense intended to be conveyed. Mark i. 4, 5. — “ John did *sprinkle* in the wilderness, and preach the *sprinkling* of repentance for the remission of sins.” “ And there went out

unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all *sprinkled* of him *in the river Jordan*." Mark i. 9. — "And Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was *sprinkled* of John *in Jordan*. And straightway *coming up out of the water*," &c. Acts ii. 38. — "Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be *sprinkled*, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ." Ibid. v. 41. — "Then they that gladly received his word, were *sprinkled*." Acts xxii. 16. — And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be *sprinkled*, and wash away thy sins." Rom. vi. 3, 4. — "Know ye not, that so many of us as were *sprinkled into Jesus Christ*, were *sprinkled into his death*? Therefore we are *buried* with him by *sprinkling* into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Gal. iii. 27. — "For as many of you as have been *sprinkled into Christ* have put on Christ." Col. ii. 12. — "*Buried with him in sprinkling*, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Are not these quotations sufficient to prove the utter inadequateness of the term "sprinkle," to convey the meaning of the sacred text? Does not the substitution of this word destroy the force and beauty of the language of scripture?

Moreover, when the act of sprinkling is re-

ferred to in the sacred volume, it is expressed by the verbs *ῥαννω* or *ῥαντιζω* to sprinkle, which verbs are generally found in connexion with the preposition *ἐπι* upon, but never with the preposition *εἰς* into. Whereas the verb *βαπτίζω*, which signifies *to immerse*, is accompanied with the appropriate prepositions, *ἐν* *in* and *εἰς* *into*: Jesus was *immersed in* Jordan; the inhabitants of Jerusalem were *immersed in* the river Jordan: Philip and the eunuch went down *εἰς into* the water, and he baptized him.

The verb *βαπτίζω* is used twice by our Lord in reference to his own sufferings. First, in Mark x. 38, 39. — “ But Jesus said unto them, ye know not what ye ask; can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, *καὶ τὸ βάπτισμα, ὃ ἐγὼ βαπτίζομαι βαπτισθῆναι* and be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with? And Jesus said unto them, ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the Baptism that I am baptized withal, shall ye be baptized. And again in Luke xii. 50. — “ But I have a Baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straightened till it be accomplished!” Dr. Campbell, though a Pædobaptist, has confirmed our opinion of the meaning of this word, by using the terms immersion and immerse, in his translation of these passages; indeed, who would venture to substitute the word sprinkling or pouring, as an equally apt illustration of Christ’s sufferings?

There are two places where this verb is translated *to wash*, which are adduced by the Pædobaptists as strong evidence against us. Mark vii. 3, 4. — For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except *νιψονται* they *wash* their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except *βαπτισονται* they *wash*, they eat not.” Also Luke xi. 38. — “ And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first *εβαπτισθη* *washed* before dinner.” There is an obscurity about the former passage as it stands in the English Testament, occasioned by our translators not having preserved the distinction which exists in the original. Mark evidently refers to *two different modes* of ablution, practised by those Jews who held the tradition of the elders, and by the Pharisees in particular. *The one* included the washing of the hands in the ordinary way, before sitting down to meat, and is expressed by the verb *νιπτω*. *The other* included a higher degree of purification observed on returning from market, or any place of public resort, and is expressed by the verb *βαπτίζω*. If a distinction be not intended by the use of these two different verbs, then there is a needless repetition; for certainly those who always scrupulously washed their hands before meat, would not omit the practice on returning from the market — a circumstance which would render it more necessary; and the historian has shewn that

they were more particular on this occasion, than in the ordinary course, by using the verb βαπτίζω to dip, instead of νίπτω to wash the hands.

This explanation is defended by Pædobaptist critics of the highest celebrity: Dr. Lightfoot says, “The Jews use the washing of the hands and the plunging of the hands; and the word *νίψονται wash*, in our evangelist seems to answer to the former, and *βαπτισονται baptize* to the latter.” Dr. Campbell also; “For the Pharisees, and indeed all the Jews who observe the tradition of the elders, eat not until they have washed their hands by pouring a little water upon them; and if they be come from the market, *by dipping them.*” Hammond expresses himself to the same purport; “The word signifies the washing of any part, as the hands here, by way of immersion in water, as that is opposed to affusion or pouring water upon them.” And Grotius asserts that immersion is the sense of this passage; for he says, “They purified themselves with greater care from pollution contracted at the market, not only by washing their hands, but by immersing their whole body.” Whether this immersion extended to the wrists only, as supposed by Pocock, Hammond, Whitby, and some few others, or to the elbows, as maintained by Theophylact, Drusius, and Capellus; or whether the whole body was immersed, according to the opinion of Vatablus and Grotius, is of little

importance to the subject in hand, since they are all agreed that the word βαπτίζω signifies to dip.

We shall further prove that this was the primitive mode,

II. From the places where the first Christians administered it.

We are told that John and his disciples baptized *in Jordan*, the chief river in Palestine. *In this river* Jesus was baptized, and it is expressly said concerning him, that “When he was baptized, he *went up* straightway *out of* the water.” Here are two particulars, which we shall notice—first, the *place where* John baptized; *in the river Jordan*. It is not said that he baptized on the banks of the river; nor that he took water out of the river, and sprinkled or poured it upon his converts; but that he *baptized in the river*: no form of words can be more perspicuous: had sprinkling or pouring been *the mode*, or even *a mode*, why did he sprinkle them *in a river*? No administrator of Infant Baptism at the present day, chooses a river as the fittest place where to perform the ceremony of sprinkling; he knows very well that a little water in a basin is all that he needs, and he wisely directs it to be brought to him:—surely John and his disciples, and Jesus and his Apostles, would have followed a similar plan, had they been in the habit of sprinkling;

but if they uniformly baptized or immersed their converts, there was a propriety in the places which they selected.

Again, it is said of Christ, “ And Jesus when he was baptized *went up* straightway *out of the water.*” It has been objected, that these words mean no more than that Christ went away from the water, that is, from the banks of the river; Dr. Campbell has rendered the passage, “ Jesus being baptized no sooner *arose out of the water;*” if he *arose out of the water*, it is evident he must first *have gone down into it*; — and thus according to the rendering of that eminent critic, the Pædobaptists are driven from one of their strong holds!

That *απο* has the sense of *out of*, is plain from Matt. vii. 4. “ Let me pull out the mote *απο* *out of* thine eye,” and again, chap. xiv. 29. “ And when Peter was come down *απο* *out of* the ship.”* Dr. Whitby has the following remarks on this subject: “ The observation of the Greek church is this, that He who *ascended out of the water*, must first *descend down into it*; baptism therefore is to be performed not by sprinkling, but by washing the body; and indeed it can be only from ignorance of the Jewish rites in Baptism that this is questioned.”

It is also said that “ John was baptizing at

* See also Mark xvi. 7.; Luke iv. 35, 41.; Acts ii. 9. xvii. 2. xxviii. 23.

Enon near to Salem, *because there was much water there.*" This is a confirmation of what we have already advanced respecting his baptizing in the river Jordan: nor does the objection made by certain Pædobaptists to the phrase *much water*, weaken the evidence which we derive from it in favour of our opinion. For, admitting that the words ὕδατα πολλὰ signify *many waters*, it does not necessarily follow that these were shallow streams: the expression is idomatical, while the sense is to be taken in the Jewish acceptance of the terms; and for this, we must turn to the Old Testament, where we shall find ὕδατα πολλὰ corresponding with מים רבים (majim rabbim) *many waters*. The Hebrews applied this phrase to all large collections of water—the *sea* is called by the Psalmist in the 77th and 107th Psalms, מים רבים *many waters*, and by the seventy ὕδατα πολλὰ *much water*.* And again. Psalm xviii. 16.—“He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of מים רבים ὕδατων πολλων *many waters*.” Ps. xciii. 4.—“The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of מים רבים *many waters*.” Rev. i. 15.—“And his voice as the sound ὕδατων πολλων *of many waters*.” Certainly it must be conceded that the phrase, as used in the foregoing instances, refers to a large body of water: a shallow brook, a narrow stream, or many of these pursuing their course in one direction, could never be an apt

* See also Is. xvii. 12, 13.; Ezek. xliii. 3.

illustration of the voice of Jehovah, which breaketh the cedars — could not illustrate the deep affliction from which the Psalmist was delivered by the arm of omnipotence ! And why should the very same phrase, when used in the New Testament, be supposed to mean small springs, and shallow rivulets, when the whole connexion in which it stands in the Old Testament, proves that it must mean a considerable body of water ?

The history of Philip baptizing the Eunuch, is strong evidence in favour of immersion. We are told that “ they came to a certain water, and the Eunuch said, See here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized ? And they went down both of them into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him ; and when they were come up out of the water,” &c. Here, as in other passages to which we have referred, they both went down into the water, and when Philip had baptized the Eunuch, they both came up out of the water. The historian is very particular in describing the circumstance of their descent into the water, as well as of their ascent out of it. The attempts which have been made to overthrow the fact here recorded, by disputing the proper signification of the Greek prepositions, is puerile in the extreme ; and desperate must be that cause which requires to be supported by such an expedient. That the prepositions *εἰς* and *ἐκ* do, in some instances mean *to* and *from*, no one will

deny; yet they more frequently and necessarily signify *into* and *out of*: their true meaning, however, must be decided by their connexion; and it will be found, on an impartial survey of this passage, that the preposition *εις* must have the force of *into*, in order to give the meaning intended by the historian; for he says, that Philip and the eunuch being some *επι* to a certain water, they both of them *κατεβησαν* went down or descended *εις* *into* it.

In the following scriptures also, the preposition *εις* necessarily means *into*. Eph. iv. 9. — “Now that he *ανεβη* ascended, what is it but that he also *κατεβη* descended first *εις* into the lower parts of the earth.” Matt. ii. 13. — “Take the young child and his mother, and flee *εις* into Egypt.” Mark xvi. 25. — “And very early in the morning, they came *επι* to the sepulchre at the rising of the sun, and entering *εις* into the sepulchre.” John v. 7. — “Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me *εις* into the pool.” John. vi. 16, 17. — “And when even was come, his disciples *κατεβησαν* went down, not *εις* into, but *επι* to the sea; and entered *εις* into a ship.” Acts xii. 10. — “When they were past the first and the second ward, they came *επι* to the iron gate that leadeth *εις* into the city.”

From these and other passages it is evident that the preposition in Acts vii. 38. ought to be rendered *into*, according to our translation, shew-

ing that Philip took the eunuch into the water and immersed him.

The practice of baptizing in rivers has been very common in various countries, and was performed in the first ages of the Christian church, in imitation of the apostolic mode. Bede, in his ecclesiastical history, gives an account of Paulinus baptizing king Edwin of York in the year 627, and afterwards of his baptizing the king's son, and many of the nobles and other persons at different times in the rivers Glen, Swale, and Trent. St. Austin also used to baptize his converts in the rivers in this country. Dr. Wall justly says, (chap. ix. p. 292.) "Before the Christian religion was so far encouraged as to have churches built for its service, they baptized in any river, pond," &c. So Tertullian says; "It is all one whether a person is washed in the sea, or in a pond, in a fountain, or in a river, in a standing or in a running water: nor is there any difference between those whom John baptized in Jordan, and those that Peter baptized in the river Tiber." This early Father makes no quibble about the preposition so much disputed by some in our day; he says, "John did baptize *in* the river Jordan," and that they baptized, not *by* ponds and rivers, but *in* them.

In after-ages, when places of worship were built, and churches formed, baptisteries were made large enough for the immersion of adults;

of this kind, were the baptisteries at Constantinople, Ravenna, Venice, Florence, Milan, and the celebrated baptistery of Saint John Lateran at Rome. These buildings contained, besides the bath in which the converts were immersed, separate apartments where the men and women changed their clothes. They continued in use till about the sixth century, when baptisteries were erected in places of worship; but when dipping was changed for pouring, the baptistery gave place to the font; and since pouring has been succeeded by sprinkling, the font has in its turn made way for the basin.

The truth of the above statements is confirmed by the testimony of writers, whose profound researches into the antiquities of the Christian church, have stamped their opinion with an authority that has been appealed to as decisive on certain points relating to the customs of the primitive Christians.

Dr. Cave having noticed, on the authority of Justin Martyn and Tertullian, that the early converts to Christianity were taken to any place where there was water; and were baptized, either in ponds or lakes, fountains or rivers, makes the following remarks: -- "Afterwards they had baptisteria, or, as we call them, fonts, built at first near the church, then in the church porch, to represent Baptism's being the entrance into the mystical church; afterwards they were

placed in the church itself. They were usually very large and capacious, not only that they might comport with the general customs of those times of persons baptized being immersed, or put under the water, but because the stated times of Baptism returning so seldom, great multitudes were usually baptized at the same time.*

The learned Mr. Bingham, in his celebrated work on the antiquities of the Christian church, has clearly shewn, that the primitive Christians baptized by immersion, from the places to which they resorted for the purpose of administering the ordinance. “In the Apostolic age, and some time after, before churches and baptisteries were generally erected, they baptized in any place where they had conveniences, as John baptized in Jordan, and Philip baptized the eunuch in the wilderness, and Paul the jailor in his own house. So Tertullian observes, that Peter baptized his converts in the Tiber at Rome, as John had done in Jordan, and that there was no difference whether a man was baptized in the sea, or in a lake, in a river, or in a fountain. — After this manner the author of the recognitions, under the name of Clemens Romanus, represents Peter preaching to the people, and telling them, that they might wash away their sins in the water of a river, or a fountain, or the sea: and he describes his own Baptism and some others as given them

* Dr. Cave's *Primit. Christi.* pt. 1. chap. 10.

by Peter in certain fountains in Syria on the sea shore. But in after ages baptisteries were built adjoining to the church, and then rules were made, that Baptism should ordinarily be administered no where but in them.”*

In another place, when speaking of the construction of the baptisteries which were used in the early ages of the Christian church, he says: “ These baptisteries were anciently very capacious, because, as Dr. Cave truly observes, the stated times of baptizing returning but seldom, there were usually great multitudes to be baptized at the same time. And then the manner of baptizing by immersion, or dipping under water, made it necessary to have a large font likewise. Whence the author of the *Chronicon Alexandrinum* styles the baptistery whither Basilicus fled to take sanctuary *μεγα φωτιστηριον*, the great illuminary, or school of Baptism, which was indeed so capacious, that we read some time of councils meeting and sitting there, as Du Fresne shews out of the acts of the councils of Chalcedon, and Suicerus has observed the same in the acts of the councils of Carthage, which speaks of a council at Constantinople held in the baptistery of the church. For the baptistery, properly speaking, was the whole house, or building, in which the font stood, and where all the ceremonies of Baptism were performed; but the font was only the

* Bingham's *Origines Ecclesiasticæ*, vol. 1. b. 2. chap. 6.

fountain, or pool of water, wherein the persons were immersed or baptized.”*

Again, having described the accommodations with which the ancient baptisteries were provided, such as distinct apartments for the use of the men and women, the vestments to be worn by the candidates after Baptism, the attendance of deaconesses upon the females, and the manner in which the persons about to be baptized prepared themselves for the ordinance, he remarks: “They were usually baptized by immersion, or dipping, of their whole bodies under water, to represent the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, together and therewith to signify their own dying unto sin, the destruction of its power, and the resurrection to a new life. There are a great many passages in the Epistles of St. Paul which plainly refer to this custom.† And as this was the original apostolical practice, so it continued to be the universal practice of the church for many ages, upon the same symbolical reasons as it was first used by the apostles. Indeed the church was so punctual to this rule, that we never read of any exception made to it in ordinary cases; no, not in the Baptism of infants. For it appears from the *Ordo Romanus*, and *Gregory’s Sacramentarium*, that infants as well as others were baptized by immersion; and the

* Bingham’s *Orig. Eccl.* vol. 1. b. 8. chap. 7.

† See *Rom.* vi. 3, 4, : *Col.* ii. 12.

rules of the church, except in cases of danger, do still require it. But in two cases a mitigation of this rule was allowed. In cases of sickness and extreme danger of life. Therefore that which the ancients called Clinick Baptism, that is, Baptism by aspersion or sprinkling upon a sick bed, was never disputed against as an unlawful or imperfect Baptism, though some laws were made to debar men who were so baptized from ascending to the dignities of the church.” *

That learned and distinguished antiquarian, Archdeacon Nicholson, who was afterwards Bishop of Carlisle, in his letter to Sir William Dugdale, respecting the large Saxon font at Bridekirk, in Cumberland, says : “ There is fairly represented on the font, a person in a long sacerdotal habit dipping a child into the water ;” and then remarks, “ Now sir, I need not acquaint you that the sacrament of Baptism was anciently administered by plunging into the water, in the western as well as the eastern parts of the church ; and that the Gothic word, Daupgan ; † the German word, Tauffen ; the Danish word, Dobe ; and the Belgic, Doopen ; do as clearly make out that practice as the Greek word βαπτίζω.” ‡

Such then is the testimony of men, whose high episcopal principles will screen them from the suspicion of favouring the cause of the Baptists.

* Bingham's Orig. Eccl. vol. 1. b. 11. chap. 11.

† Mar. i. 8. and Luke iii. 7. 12.

‡ Camden's Britannia.

Let the impartial reader consider their statements, and enquire — why did the first teachers of Christianity take their converts to large collections of water, as rivers, lakes, and ponds, for the purpose of baptizing them? — Why, in subsequent ages, did the churches erect spacious baptisteries, furnished with distinct rooms and changes of raiment for the men and women? — And why did they pass laws, to prevent those who had received a Clinick Baptism from ascending to the dignities of the church, if either sprinkling or pouring were considered a primitive and legitimate mode of Baptism? These circumstances, in relation to the history of this ordinance, prove, that not only the pastors, but that the people themselves were, both in their principles and practice, opposed to the notions of modern Pædobaptists; and that they considered a total immersion of the body as essential to the right administration of Christian Baptism.

III. We shall proceed to shew that Baptism by immersion is supported by the constant and universal practice of the Greek church.

The Greek church, which took its rise in the first ages of Christianity, has to this day invariably baptized by immersion; its practice therefore, is of some authority in the present controversy. That body of Christians, which

goes under the general denomination of the Greek church, is scattered throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa, and is, according to Dr. King's account, of greater extent than the Latin church, with all the branches that have sprung from it.* That these Christians have constantly administered Baptism by immersion is acknowledged by the whole testimony of ecclesiastical history. Dr. Wall, when speaking of the introduction of pouring and sprinkling, says, "What has been said of this custom of pouring and sprinkling water, in the ordinary use of Baptism, is to be understood only in reference to these western parts of Europe, for it is used ordinarily no where else. The Greek church, in all the branches of it, does still use immersion; and they hardly count a child, except in cases of sickness, well baptized without it. And so do all other Christians in the world, except the Latins. That which I hinted before is a rule that does not fail in any particular that I know of; viz. All the nations of Christians, that do now, or formerly did submit to the authority of the Bishop of Rome, do ordinarily baptize their infants by pouring or sprinkling; and though the English received not this custom till after the decay of popery, yet they have received it from such neighbouring nations as had begun it in the times of the Pope's power: but all other Chris-

* See Rites and Ceremonies of the Greek Church.

tians in the world, who never owned the Pope's usurped power, do and ever did dip their infants in the ordinary use. And if we take the divisions of the world from the three main parts of it, all the Christians in Asia, all in Africa, and about one third part of Europe, are of the last sort, (*who baptize by dipping,*) in which third part of Europe are comprehended the Christians of Græcia, Thracia, Servia, Bulgaria, Rascia, Walachia, Moldavia, Russia, Nigra, &c. and even the Muscovites, who, if coldness of the country will excuse, might plead for a dispensation with the most reason of any."* What is this, but an acknowledgement of one of the grand principles for which the Baptists contend, and which the Greeks, who of course must have understood the language formerly in common use among them, have from the earliest times through all succeeding ages maintained, *that immersion is the scriptural, and only proper mode, of baptizing, and that sprinkling is a popish innovation.* And this learned Pædobaptist distinctly confesses that the church of Rome has changed the original mode, by introducing sprinkling in the room of dipping.

According to the ritual of the Greek church, the person to be baptized is first prayed over, and then presented to the priest, who takes the consecrated oil with his fingers, and makes the sign of the cross on the forehead, the breast, and between the shoulders of the candidate, saying :

* History of Inft. Bap. chap. 9. pt. 2.

N. the servant of God is anointed with the oil of gladness in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; now and for ever. Amen.

After the whole body is anointed, the priest baptizes him, holding him upright, and turning his face towards the east, saying :

N. the servant of God is baptized,

In the name of the Father. Amen. First immersion.

In the name of the Son. Amen. Second immersion.

In the name of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Third immersion; now and for ever, even unto ages of ages. Amen.

On this subject Dr. King makes the following observations. “The Greek church uniformly practises trine immersion, undoubtedly the most primitive manner; which was changed for one immersion in Spain in opposition to the Arians established there: who were supposed to avail themselves of that manner to express symbolically the difference or degrees of divinity in the Godhead. Gregory, called the Great, gives an answer to Leander, Bishop of Sevil, who applied to him for his advice on the dispute which arose on that point. The reason, says the Pope, we use three immersions, is to signify the mystery of Christ’s three days’ burial; that whilst the infant

is thrice lifted up out of the water, the resurrection on the third day may be expressed thereby. But if any one thinks this is rather done in regard to the Holy Trinity, a single immersion in baptism does no ways prejudice that, for so long as the unity of substance is preserved, it is no harm whether a child be baptized with one immersion or three; because three immersions may represent the trinity of persons, and one immersion the unity of the Godhead. *

Not only has the Greek church continued the practice of immersion, but all those different bodies who have seceded from it. The Nestorians, and the Monophysites, who separated in the fifth century, — the Georgians, the Armenians, with numerous other sects, scattered throughout Egypt, Nubia, Abyssinia, and the more distant parts of Africa and Asia, have constantly adhered to this mode: but this practice has been peculiar to the Greek and Eastern churches only during the last five centuries; for before that time, according to the testimony of both Papists and Protestants, it was the custom of the whole Latin church and all its branches to baptize by immersion; and this they did till the thirteenth century. The French church seems to have been the first that practised sprinkling; from them it spread into Italy, where, about the year 1250, dipping as the general mode was dis-

* Dr. King, Rites of the Greek Church. P. 192.

continued; from, thence it was admitted into Germany, and other countries under the authority of the Pope; and last of all it was introduced into the English church in the sixteenth century, where it was practised in direct opposition to the ritual, which prescribed the following mode,—
 “Then the priest shall take the child in his hands, and ask the name; and naming the child, shall dip it in the water thrice; first dipping the right side, secondly the left side, the third time dipping the face toward the font.”*

How different is this account from those representations which are made by a certain class of Pædobaptist teachers in our day, who labour to impress the minds of their hearers with the notion that dipping is a modern custom, observed only by a very small and despised sect, called Baptists, who sprang up quite recently in Germany, Holland, and England; while their own mode of administering Baptism, by sprinkling, is, they say, of the highest antiquity, and of universal practice!

IV. We shall now notice the testimony of learned Pædobaptists in favour of immersion.

It is remarkable, that while some Pædobaptists, in their zeal for sprinkling, represent our practice as without foundation in the precepts of

* See Wall's *Infant Baptism*, chap. ix. pt. 2. Also Gibson's *Codex Juris Ecclesiastici Anglicani*, vol. i. p. 440.

the New Testament, and the example of the Apostles ; there are others, distinguished for their piety and learning, who candidly confess that our mode is the most consistent with scripture precept and primitive practice, and who deplore the introduction of sprinkling. Such a discrepancy of opinion, among persons who agree in espousing the same cause, may at the first view appear singular, yet it is only the natural consequence of departing from the principles so clearly defined in the oracles of God ; and it serves to prove, both that the validity of the present practice of Pædobaptists is, in their own estimation, doubtful, and that there are some points in their system, which are not founded upon that high authority, and supported by that indubitable evidence which render them invincibly conclusive to a thoughtful and reasoning mind. In proof of this we refer to the following authorities.

First : To the testimony of writers belonging to the church of Rome.

Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, remarks : “ To baptize signifies to plunge, as is granted by all the world. This ceremony was taken from the purification of the Jews ; and because the most perfect purification consisted in being totally immersed in water, Jesus Christ, who came to sanctify and accomplish the ancient ceremonies, was pleased to choose this as the most significant

and simple, to express the remission of sins, and the regeneration of the new man. The Baptism of St. John the Baptist, which served for a preparative to that of Jesus Christ, was performed by plunging. The prodigious multitudes of people that flocked to his Baptism made John the Baptist choose the places about Jordan, and among those places the country of Ænon, near to Salem, because there was much water there, and a great facility of dipping those who came to consecrate themselves to repentance by this holy ceremony. It does not appear that the 3000 and the 5000 mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, who were converted at the first sermons of Peter, were baptized any other way; and the greater number of those converts is no proof that they were baptized by sprinkling, as some have conjectured. For besides that nothing obliges us to say that they were all baptized on the same day, it is certain that John the Baptist, who baptized no less numbers, seeing that all Judæa flocked to him, baptized no other way than by dipping. And his example shews us, that to baptize a great number of people, those places were chosen where there was abundance of water. Add to this, that the baths and purifications of the ancients rendered this ceremony easy and familiar at that time. In fine, we read not in Scripture that Baptism was otherwise administered; and we are able to make it appear by the

acts of councils, and by ancient rituals, that for 1300 years Baptism was thus administered throughout the whole church, as far as was possible. The very words used in the rituals to express the action of the godfathers and godmothers, saying, *they lift up the child from the baptismal font*, is sufficient to shew that the child was plunged in it. Though these are incontestible truths, yet neither we, nor those of the pretended reformed religion, hearken to the Baptists, who hold immersion to be essential and indispensable; nor have either they or we feared to change this dipping (as I may say) of the whole body, into a bare aspersion or infusion of one part of it.

In another part of this treatise, the same writer observes: "Jesus Christ has ordered to dip, as we have often observed. We have also taken notice, that he was baptized in this form, that his apostles practised it, and that it was continued in the church down to the 12th and 13th ages; and yet Baptism given only by infusion is admitted without any difficulty, on the sole authority of the church (the church of Rome). These words, "teach and baptize," have a long time perplexed our reformed Gentlemen; and till the year 1614, obliged them to say, that it was not lawful to administer Baptism without preaching either before or immediately after it. This is what was determined in the synod of Tonneins, conformably to all the preceding synods. But

in the synod of Castres in 1626, they began to be more lax as to this point, and resolved not to press the observation of the regulations of Tonneins. At last, in the synod of Charenton in 1631 (the same that admitted the Lutherans to communion), it was declared, that preaching before or after Baptism was not essential to it, but appertained to order, of which the church might dispose. So that, *that*, which was believed and practised so long as prescribed by Jesus Christ himself, was changed; and without any testimony of the Scripture, was declared to be a thing which the church might order as she pleased.

As for infants, those of the pretended reformed religion indeed say, their Baptism is founded on the Scripture, yet they produce no passage express to that purpose, but argue from very remote, not to say very doubtful, and even very false consequences. It is certain, that all the proofs they bring from the Scripture on this subject have no force at all, and those that might have some strength are destroyed by themselves. Thus the proofs that are drawn from the necessity of Baptism, to compel men to allow it to infants, are destroyed by our reformed Gentlemen. And these that follow are substituted in their room, as they are noted in their catechisms, in their confessions of faith, and in their prayers: Namely; that the children of believers are born

in the covenant, according to this promise, I will be thy God, and the God of thine offspring to a thousand generations. From whence they conclude, that since the virtue and substance of Baptism belongs to infants, it would be injurious to them to deny them the sign which is inferior to it.

By a like reason they will find themselves forced to give them the communion together with Baptism; for they who are in the covenant are incorporated with Jesus Christ; the infants of believers are in covenant, therefore they are incorporated with Jesus Christ's: and having by this means, according to them, the virtue and substance of the communion, they ought to say, as they do of Baptism, that the sign of it cannot without injury be refused them.

The Baptists maintain that these words, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat," have not more force to require the age of discretion in them who partake of the holy supper, than those other words, "He that believeth and is baptized," have to require it in those who are admitted to Baptism. The consequence that is drawn from a new reform of the covenant of the ancient church, and circumcision, does not affect them. The covenant of the ancient church, say they, was made by natural birth, because it was carnal, and therefore the seal of it was impressed in their flesh by circumcision almost as soon as

they were born. But under the new covenant it is not enough for a man to be born, he must be born again to enter into it. And seeing the two covenants are very different, there is no ground to conclude from one sign to another ; so that the comparison which is made between Circumcision and Baptism is of no weight.

“ Experience has shewn, that all the attempts of the reformed to confound the Baptists by the Scriptures, have been weak ; and therefore they are at last obliged to alledge to them the practice of the church.” *

Dupin, in his abridgment of the discipline of the Christian church at the close of the third century, informs us, “ That they baptized with some ceremonies those that were well instructed in their religion, and who had given satisfactory signs of their sincere conversion ; they generally dipped them thrice in the water, invoking the name of the Holy Trinity.” And again, at the conclusion of the fourth century ; “ Baptism was administered to the infants and adult persons with many ceremonies. They were dipped three times in water.” †

Rigaltius : This learned man, in his notes on Cyprian’s Letter to Fidus on Infant Baptism, makes the following judicious remarks : “ Let us see what the Apostles have delivered concerning

* Treatise on the Communion in two kinds. See Jos. Stennett’s Answer to Russen.

† Ecclesiastical History, vol. 1. pages 182, 289.

Baptism. Men are made, not born, Christians. For no man is esteemed a believer before he knows Christ. It therefore first becomes a man to hear the things which pertain to the Christian faith; and when he has heard and embraced them, he may then, on account of his faith, be called a believer. And that the things which are brought home to his understanding through his ears, may make a stronger impression upon his mind, they are brought immediately under the notice of his eyes by the sign of Baptism; he is therefore immersed, dipped or dyed in water, either in a river, a fountain, a lake, or a bath. Now as he has received three things; for he has received faith; and through faith has obtained the pardon of all his past transgressions; added to which, he enjoys the pledge of a resurrection to everlasting life; so these things are shadowed forth by Baptism. The being dipped or dyed in water, represents a man as imbued with faith; the being overwhelmed, as washed from his sins and stains, and the emersion, or the coming up out of the water, typifies his resurrection. We therefore now call him a complete believer *πιστει βεβαμμενοι εις βαθος* as one deeply tinctured with the Christian faith, like as the wool is saturated with the purple dye. Thus Philip baptized the Eunuch in water, which they happened to meet with in their journey, after that he was well instructed in the Christian religion,

and when he had professed to believe with all his heart that Christ was the Son of God. By this Baptism of the Eunuch, it appears that immersion was the mode, and that the form of immersion was then practised with great simplicity. Neither did Christ command his Apostles otherwise when he sent them forth: "Go," said he, "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Thus Luke speaks respecting one of Peter's sermons to the people: "They who believed his words were baptized, and on that day there were added to the church about three thousand souls. He who had believed in Christ with all his heart, now, by the same faith lived to God as a Christian; as he had imbibed Christ so he wholly approved the things of God. Baptism, or immersion, was therefore to him the sign of a genuine faith, and hence the necessity of the sign or sacrament shewed the necessity of the thing of which it was the sacrament. *

THE TESTIMONY OF EPISCOPALIAN WRITERS.

Dr. Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down: "A custom in the administration of a sacrament introduced against the analogy and mystery, the purpose and signification of it, ought not to be complied with. I instanced before in a custom of the church of England, of sprinkling water upon

* Opera Cypriani. Epistola, 64. Edit. Oxon.

infants in their Baptism ; and I promised to consider it again. — ‘ *Baptizabant enim veteres, non manibus suis aquam baptizando aspergentes, sed trina immersione hoc evangelii sequentes ; ascendit ex aqua, ergo descenderat. Ecce immersio, non aspersio,*’ said Jeremy the Patriarch of Constantinople. — ‘ Straightway Jesus went up out of the water (saith the gospel) ; he came up, therefore he went down. Behold an immersion, not an aspersion.’ And the ancient churches, following this of the gospel, did not, in their Baptisms, sprinkle water with their hands, but immerse the catechumen or the infant.” The learned Bishop here produces a number of authorities from the Greek fathers affirmative of the universal practice of the church in their days, and then observes.—“ All which are a perfect conviction, that the custom of the ancient churches was not sprinkling, but immersion, in pursuance of the sense of the word in the commandment, and the example of our blessed Saviour. Now this was of so sacred account in their esteem, that they did not count it lawful to receive him into the clergy, who had been only sprinkled in his Baptism ; as we learn from the Epistle of Cornelius to Fabius of Antioch ; ‘ *Μη εξον ην τον εν κλινη δια νοσον περιχυθεντα ωσπερ και ουτος εις κληρον τινα γενεσθαι.* it is not lawful that he who was sprinkled in his bed by reason of sickness, should be admitted into holy orders.’ Nay, it went further than this ;

they were not sure, that they were rightly christened, yea, or no, who were only sprinkled; as appears in the same epistle of Cornelius in Eusebius, *ειγε χρη λεγειν τον τοιουτον ειληφεναι*, which Nicephorus thus renders, ‘if at least such a sprinkling may be called Baptism;’ and this was not only spoken in diminution of Novatus, and in indignation against his person, for it was a formed and a solemn question made by Magnus, to St. Cyprian, ‘An habendi sint Christiani legitimi, eo quod aqua salutari non loti sunt, sed perfusi,’ whether they were to be esteemed right Christians who were only sprinkled with water, and not washed or dipped? He answers, that the Baptism was good when it was done, ‘necessitate cogente et Deo indulgentiam suam largiente:’ in the case of necessity, God pardoning, and necessity compelling.” And this is the sense and law of the church of England; not that it be indifferent, but that all infants be dipped, except in the case of sickness, and then sprinkling is permitted.” *

Archbishop Tillotson : “ By Baptism we have solemnly taken upon us the profession of Christianity, and engaged ourselves to renounce the devil and all his works, and obediently to keep God’s commandments. Anciently those who were baptized put off their garments, which signifies the putting off the body of sin; and were

* Ductor Dubitantium, b: 3. chap. 4. rul. 15.

immersed and buried in the water, to represent their death of sin ; and then did rise up again out of the water, to signify their entrance upon a new life. And to these customs the Apostle alludes, Rom. vi. 2—7.” *

Dr. Whitby, in his remarks upon the words of the Apostle, “ We are buried with him in Baptism,” says ;—“ It being so expressly declared here, and in Col. ii. 12. that we are buried with Christ in Baptism, by being buried under water ; and the argument to oblige us to a conformity to his death, by dying unto sin, being taken hence, and this immersion being religiously observed by all Christians for thirteen centuries, and approved by our church, and the change of it unto sprinkling, even without any allowance from the author of this institution, or any licence from any council of the church, being that which the Romanist still urgeth to justify his refusal of the cup to the laity : it were to be wished that this custom of immersion might be again of general use, and aspersion only permitted, as of old, as in the case of the Clinici, or in present danger of death.” †

Dr. Cave, in his *Primitive Christianity*, observes, “ that the party baptized was wholly immersed, or put under water ; which was the almost constant and universal custom of those times ; whereby they did most notably and sig-

* Ser. Vol. 1. Ser. 7.

† Vide Comment. on Rom. chap. 6.

nificantly express the great end and effect of Baptism. As in immersion there are in a manner three several acts, the putting the person into water, his abiding there for a little time, and his rising up again; so by these were represented Christ's death, burial, and resurrection; and in conformity thereunto, our dying unto sin, the destruction of its power, and our resurrection to a new course of life. By the person being *put into water*, was lively represented the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, and being washed from the filth and pollution of them; by his *abode under it*, which was a kind of burial in the water, his entering into a state of death or mortification, like as Christ remained for some time under the state or power of death; therefore as many as are baptized into Christ, are said to be baptized into his death, and to be buried with him by Baptism into death, that the old man being crucified with him, the body of sin might be destroyed that henceforth he might not serve sin; for that he that is dead is freed from sin, *as the Apostle clearly explains the meaning of this rite.* And then by *his emersion or rising up* out of the water, was signified his entering upon a new course of life differing from that he lived before: that like as Christ was raised up by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." *

* Prim. Chris. pt. 1. chap. 10.

Dr. Wall, speaking of the primitive Christians, says, "Their general and ordinary way was to baptize by immersing or dipping the person, whether it were an infant, or grown man, or woman, into the water. This is so plain and clear, by an infinite number of passages, that as one cannot but pity the weak endeavours of such Pædobaptists as would maintain the negative of it; so also we ought to disown, and show a dislike of the profane scoffs which some people give to the English Antipædobaptists, merely for their use of dipping. 'Tis one thing to maintain that that circumstance is not absolutely necessary to the essence of Baptism; and another to go about to represent it as ridiculous and foolish, or as shameful and indecent; when it was in all probability the way by which our blessed Saviour, and for certain was the most usual and ordinary way, by which the ancient Christians did receive their Baptism. 'Tis a great want of prudence, as well as of honesty, to refuse to grant to an adversary what is certainly true and may be proved so: it creates a jealousy of all the rest that one says." *

Mr. D. Rogers says, "None of old were wont to be sprinkled; and I confess myself unconvinced by demonstration from Scripture for infants' sprinkling. It ought to be the church's part to cleave to the institution, which is *dipping*; and he betrays the church, whose officer he is, to

* History of Infant Baptism, vol. 2. ch. 9.

a disorderly error, if he cleave not to the institution, which is to dip. That the minister is to dip in water as the meetest act, the word βαπτίζω notes it. For the Greeks wanted not other words to express any other act besides dipping, if the institution could bear it. What resemblance of the burial or the resurrection of Christ in sprinkling. *All antiquity and Scripture confirm that way.* To dip, therefore, is exceedingly material to the ordinance; which was the usage of old, without exception to countries, hot or cold."

Dr. Towerson, a most strenuous advocate for Episcopacy and Infant Baptism, when enquiring into this subject, boldly affirms, in opposition to the false glosses of modern expositors, that both the language and practice of the New Testament prove immersion to be "the only instituted and legitimate mode of Baptism." His words are: "Which is a more material question, than is commonly deemed by us, who have been accustomed to baptize by a bare effusion, or sprinkling of water upon the party. For in things which depend for their force upon the mere will and pleasure of him who instituted them, there ought, no doubt, great regard to be had to the commands of him who did so, as without which there is no reason to presume that we shall receive the benefit of that ceremony, to which he hath been pleased to annex it. Now what the command of Christ was in this particular, cannot well be

doubted of by those who shall consider, First, the words of Christ concerning it, and the practice of those times, whether in the Baptism of John or of our Saviour. For the words of Christ are, that they should baptize or dip those whom they made disciples to him (for so no doubt the word βαπτίζειν properly signifies), and which is more, and not without its weight, that they should baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; thereby intimating such a washing as should receive the party baptized within the very body of that water, which they were to baptize him with. Though if there could be any doubt concerning the signification of the words in themselves, yet would that doubt be removed by considering the practice of those times, whether in the Baptism of John or of our Saviour. For such as was the practice of those times in baptizing, such in reason are we to think our Saviour's command to have been concerning it, especially when the words themselves inclined that way, there being not otherwise any means, either for those or future times, to discover his intention concerning it. Now what the practice of those times was as to this particular, will need no other proof than their resorting to rivers, and other such like receptacles of waters for the performance of that ceremony, as that too because there was much water there. For so the Scriptures doth not only

affirm concerning the Baptism of John, but both intimates concerning that which our Saviour administered in Judea (because making John's Baptism and his to be so far forth of the same sort) and expressly affirms of the Baptism of the Eunuch, which is the only Christian Baptism the Scripture is any thing particular in the description of. Acts viii. 36—40. For what need would there have been either of the Baptists' resorting to great confluxes of water, or of Philip and the Eunuch's going down into this, were it not that the Baptism both of the one and the other was to be performed by immersion? But besides the words of our blessed Saviour, and the concurrent practice of those times, wherein this sacrament was instituted, it is in my opinion of no less consideration, that the thing signified by the sacrament of Baptism cannot otherwise be well represented than by an immersion, or at least by some more general way of purification, than that of effusion or sprinkling. The same is to be said yet more upon the account of our conforming to the death and resurrection of Christ, which we learn from St. Paul to have been the design of Baptism to signify. For though that might be, and was well enough represented by the baptized person's being buried in Baptism, and then rising out of it; yet it cannot be said to be so, or at least but very imperfectly, by the bare pouring out or sprinkling the baptismal water upon him.

But, therefore, as there is so much the more reason to represent *the rite of immersion, as the only legitimate rite of Baptism, because the only one that can answer the ends of its institution, and those things which were to be signified by it*; so especially if (as it is well known, and undoubtedly of great force) the general practice of the primitive church was agreeable thereto, and the practice of the Greek church to this very day. For who can think either the one or the other would have been so tenacious of so troublesome a rite, were it not that they were well assured, as they of the primitive church might very well be, *of its being the only instituted and legitimate one?*" *

To the above authorities we might add those of Dr. Isaac Barrow, Dr. J. Edwards, Dr. Fowler, Bishop of Gloucester, the learned Jos. Mede, Sir Norton Knatchbull, and many others, who have as decidedly maintained the divine authority of baptismal immersion, as the writers to whom we have already referred.

THE TESTIMONY OF WRITERS BELONGING TO THE CONTINENTAL REFORMED CHURCHES.

Witsius says, First, "It is certain, that both John, and the disciples of Christ, ordinarily used dipping; whose example was followed by the ancient church, as Vossius and Hornbrook, in

* Dr. Towerson, on the Church Catechism; art. Bapt.

their treatises on Baptism, have shewn from many testimonies both of the Greeks and Latins. Secondly: It cannot be denied but the native signification of the words βαπτειν and βαπτιζειν is to plunge or dip, so as to be altogether something more than επιπολαζειν, to float on the surface; but less than δυνειν, to go to the bottom and perish: as Vossius remarks. However, I have observed that the term καταδυσις, going to the bottom, is frequently used by the ancient church in the matter of Baptism; Athanasius, Quest. 94. — καταδυσαι το παιδιον εν τη κολυμβηθρα, the going down or dipping the child in the bath; and so Sozomen, lib. vi. cap. 26. has charged Eunomius with heresy for teaching that ‘the sacrament of Baptism ought to be performed by once dipping.’ Similar examples are every where to be met with. Salmasius, in his observations on Sulpitius Severus de vita Martini, c. xv. has made the following observation. ‘βαπτειν from which βαπτιζειν, signifies immersion and *not aspersion*: nor did the ancients baptize any but by dipping either once or thrice; except Clinics or persons confined to a sick bed, because these were baptized in a manner they could bear; not in an entire font, as they who put their head under water, but their body was sprinkled all over.’ Cypr. iv. Epist. 7. — ‘Thus when Novatus, in his sickness, received Baptism, he was but sprinkled all over.’ Thirdly: Nor are we to

conceal that there is a greater copiousness of signification, and a fuller similitude between the sign and the thing signified, in immersion."

In another place the same author observes; "With respect to the ceremonies in the administration, we are distinctly to take notice, first, of the immersion into the water, and the washing that is the consequence of it; secondly, the continuing under the water; thirdly, the emersion out of the water. These rites referred, either to the remembrance of those things which Christ underwent, or signify the benefit which Christ bestows upon us, or put us in mind of our duty. First, therefore, the immersion into the water represents to us that tremendous abyss of divine justice in which Christ was plunged for a time in some measure, in consequence of his undertaking for our sins; as he complained under the type of David. 'I sink in deep waters where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.'* But more particularly, an immersion of this kind deprives us of the benefits of the light, and the other enjoyments of this world; so it is a very fit representation of the death of Christ. The continuing, how short soever, under the water, represents his burial and the lowest degree of humiliation, when he was thought to be wholly cut off, while in the grave. The emersion, or coming out of the water,

* Ps. lxi. 2.

gives us some resemblance of his resurrection or victory obtained in his death over death, which he vanquished within its inmost recesses, even the grave: all these particulars the Apostle intimates, Rom. vi. 3, 4.” *

Venema declares, “ It is without controversy that Baptism in the primitive church was administered by immersion into the water, and *not by sprinkling*; seeing John is said to have baptized in Jordan and where there was much water; as Christ also did by his disciples in the neighbourhood of those places. Philip also going down into the water baptized the Eunuch; to which the Apostle refers,† and which the word itself βαπτίζειν, to baptize, sufficiently shews, since it is never used in the Scriptures to denote sprinkling, not even in Mark vii. 4. as is supposed by some. Nor is there any necessity to have recourse to the idea of sprinkling in our interpretation of Acts ii. 41. where three thousand souls are said to be added to Christ by Baptism, seeing it *might be performed by immersion equally as by aspersion*, especially as they are not said to have been baptized at the same time. The essential act of baptizing in the second century, consisted not in sprinkling, but in immersion into water in the name of each person in the Trinity. Concerning immersion, the words and phrases

* See Econ. Cov. vol. 2. book 4. chap. 16.

† Rom. vi.

that are used sufficiently testify ; and that it was performed in a river, a pool, or a fountain. To the essential rites of Baptism, pertained, in the third century, immersion, and not aspersion ; except in cases of necessity, and it was accounted a half perfect Baptism. Immersion, in the fourth century, was one of those acts that were considered as essential to Baptism, nevertheless aspersion was used in the last moments of life, on such as were called Clinics ; and also where there was not a sufficient quantity of water."

Martene declares, " That in all the ritual books or pontifical manuscripts, ancient or modern, that he had seen, *immersion is required* ; except by the Cenomanensian, and that of a more modern date, in which pouring on the head is mentioned. In the council of Ravenna also, held in the year 1311, both immersion and pouring are left to the determination of the administrator : and the council of Nismes, in the year 1284, permitted pouring if a vessel could not be had, therefore only in case of necessity. — The council of Celichith, in the beginning of the ninth century, forbade the pouring of water on the heads of infants, and commanded that they should be immersed in the font. — Baptism was administered by immersion in the twelfth century. — In the thirteenth century, Baptism was administered by immersion thrice repeated, yet so that

one immersion was esteemed sufficient, as appears from Angerius de Montfauçon. That was a singular synodal appointment under John de Zurich, Bishop of Utrecht, in the year 1291, which runs thus; — ‘ We appoint, that the head be put three times in the water, unless the child be weak, or sickly, or the season cold; then water may be poured by the hand of the priest on the head of the child, lest by plunging, or coldness, or weakness, the child should be injured and die.’ This is a statute of the synod of Utrecht, with my Lord Bishop John de Zurich at the head of it. — *The Book* says nothing about baptizing sickly infants, nor of pouring water upon the head!” *

Curcellæus: “ Baptism was performed by plunging the whole body into water, and not by sprinkling a few drops as is now the practice; for John was baptizing in Enon near to Salem, because there was much water; and they came and were baptized. Nor did the disciples that were sent out by Christ administer afterwards in any other way: and this is more agreeable to the signification of the ordinance.† I am therefore of opinion, *that we should endeavour to restore and introduce this primitive rite of immersion.*”

* Venema Hist. Eccles. secul. 1. sect. 838.; secul. 2. sect. 100.; secul. 3. sect. 51.; secul. 6. sect. 251.; secul. 8. sect. 206.; secul. 13. sect. 164.

† Rom. vi. 4.

Buddeus: “Concerning Baptism, it is particularly to be noticed, that in the apostolic church it was performed by immersion into water; which not now to mention other things, is manifest from this. The Apostle seeks an image in this immersion of the death and burial of Christ, and of mortifying the old man and raising up of the new.* There are indeed some authors who think otherwise, and contend that sprinkling was practised in the apostolic church: to convince us of which, Dr. Lightfoot has left no stone unturned. But what may be said in answer to his arguments, has already appeared in my *Institut. Theolog. Dogmat. lib. 5. cap. 1.*”†

G. J. Vossius: “That John the Baptist and the Apostles immersed persons whom they baptized, there is no doubt. For thus we read; ‘and they were baptized in Jordan. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water.’‡ It is also written, John iii. 23, ‘John baptized in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there.’ And Acts viii. 38, it is said; ‘they both went down into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch.’ And that the ancient church followed these examples, is very clearly evinced by innumerable testimonies of the fathers.”§

Limborch: “Baptism, then, consists in washing, or rather immersing the whole body into

* Rom. vi. 3, 4.

† Matt. iii. 6. 16.

‡ Buddeus’ *Ecclesia Apostolica*, cap. 7.

§ *Disputat. de Baptis. dis. 1. sect. 6.*

water, as was customary in primitive times. The apostle, Rom. vi. 4, alludes to the manner of baptizing, not as practised at this day, which is performed by sprinkling of water, but as administered of old, in the primitive church, by immersing the whole body in water, a short continuance under the water, and a speedy immersion out of the water.” *

THE TESTIMONY OF BRITISH PRESBYTERIANS AND
DISSENTERS.

Dr. Campbell says, “ I am sorry to observe that the Popish translators from the Vulgate have shown greater veneration for the style of that version than the generality of Protestant translators have shown for that of the original: for in this, the Latin is not more explicit than the Greek: yet so inconsistent are the interpreters last mentioned, that none of them have scrupled to render *εν τῷ Ιορδανῇ* in the 6th verse, *in Jordan*, though nothing can be plainer than *that if there be any incongruity in the expression in water, this in Jordan, must be equally incongruous*. But they have seen that the preposition *in*, could not be avoided *there*, without adopting a circumlocution, and saying, *with the water of Jordan*, which would have made their deviation from the text too glaring. The word βαπτίζειν

* Theolo. Christia. b. 5. chap. 27. Comment. ad Rom.

both in sacred authors, and in classical, signifies, to dip, to plunge, to immerse, and was rendered by Tertullian, the oldest of the Latin fathers, *tingere*, the term used for dying cloth, which was by immersion. It was always construed suitably to this meaning: thus it is *εν ὕδατι* *in water*, *εν τῷ Ιορδανῇ* *in the Jordan*; but I should not lay much stress on the preposition *εν*, which answering to the Hebrew **ב**, may denote *with* as well as *in*; did not the whole phraseology in regard to this ceremony, concur in evincing the same thing. Accordingly the baptized are said *αναβαίνειν* *to arise, emerge, or ascend*, verse 16. *απο του ὕδατος*, and Acts viii. 39. *εκ του ὕδατος*, *from out of the water*. Let it be observed further, that the verbs *Ῥαίνω* and *Ῥαντίζω* used in Scripture for sprinkling, are never construed in this manner. ‘I will sprinkle you with clean water,’ says God, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. or as it runs in the English translation, literally from the Hebrew, ‘I will sprinkle clean water upon you,’ is in the Septuagint *Ῥανω εφ ὑμας καθαρὸν ὕδωρ* and not as *βαπτίζω* is always construed *Ῥανω ὑμας εν καθαρῷ ὕδατι*, I will sprinkle you in clean water. See also Exod. xxxi. 21. Lev. vi. 27. xvi. 14; — had *βαπτίζω* been here employed in the sense of *Ῥαίνω* I sprinkle, which as far as I know, it never is, in any use, sacred or classical, the expression would doubtless have been *εγω μεν βαπτίζω εφ ὑμας ὕδωρ*, or *απο του ὕδατος*, I indeed baptize water upon you,

agreeably to the examples referred to. When therefore the Greek word is *adopted*, I may say, rather than *translated* into modern language, the mode of construction ought to be preserved so far as may conduce to suggest its original import. It is to be regretted that we have so much evidence that even good and learned men allow their judgments* to be warped by the sentiments and customs of the sect which they prefer.”*

The same writer observes in another work, “ I have heard a disputant of this stamp, in defiance of etymology and use, maintain that the word, rendered in the New Testament *baptize*, means more properly *to sprinkle*, than to plunge; and in defiance of all antiquity, that the former method was the earliest, and for many centuries, the most general practice in baptizing. One who argues in this manner never fails, with persons of knowledge, to betray the cause he would defend; and though, with respect to the vulgar, bold assertions generally succeed as well as arguments, sometimes better; yet a candid mind will disdain to take the help of a falsehood even in support of the truth.”†

Mr. Rich. Baxter: “ We grant that Baptism, then (in the primitive times), was by washing

* Note on Matt. iii. 11.

† Lect. on Pulpit Eloquence, p. 480.

the whole body; and did not the differences of our cold country, as to that hot one, teach us to remember, ‘I will have mercy and not sacrifice,’ it should be so here. It is commonly confessed by us to the Baptists, as our commentators declare, that in the Apostles’ times the baptized were dipped over head in the water, and that this signified their profession, both of believing the burial and resurrection of Christ; and of their own present renouncing the world and flesh, or dying to sin and living to Christ, or rising again to newness of life, or being buried and risen again with Christ as the Apostle expoundeth it in the forecited texts of Col. ii. Rom. vi. And though (as is before said) we have thought it lawful to disuse the manner of dipping and to use less water, yet we presume not to change the use and signification of it.” *

Dr. Manton: “ ‘We are buried with him in Baptism into his death;’ the like expressions you have Col. ii. 12. Buried with him in Baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him. The putting the baptized person into the water, denoteth and proclaimeth the burial of Christ, and we by submitting to it are baptized (buried) with him, or profess to be dead to sin; for none but the dead are buried. So that it signifieth Christ’s death for sin, and our dying unto sin.” †

Mr. Poole’s Continuators: “A great part of

* Paraph. on New Test. Disserta.

† Ser. on Rom. vi.

those who went out to hear John were baptized, that is, dipped, in Jordan. It is true, the first Baptisms of which we read in holy writ, were by dipping of the persons baptized. It was in a hot country, where it might be at any time without the danger of persons' lives; where it may be we judge it reasonable, and most resembling our burial with Christ by Baptism into death; but we cannot think it necessary, for God loveth mercy rather than sacrifice; and the thing signified by Baptism, viz. the washing away the soul's sins with the blood of Christ, is in Scripture expressed to us by pouring and sprinkling. Ezek. xxxvi. 25. Heb. xii. 14. 1 Pet. i. 2. It is from this (John iii. 23. see also Mar. i. 9, 10.) apparent, that both Christ and John baptized by dipping the body in water: else they need not have sought places where had been a great plenty of water."*

Mr. Thomas Lawson: "John the Baptist, that is, John the Dipper; so called because he was authorized to baptize in water. Such as rhantize or sprinkle infants have no command from Christ, nor example among the Apostles, nor the first primitive Christians for so doing. See the author of Rhantism, that is, Sprinkling; not Christ, nor the Apostles, but Cyprian; not in the days of Christ, but some two hundred and thirty years after."†

* Comment. on Matt. iii. 6. Chap. xxviii. 19, 20. John iii. 21.

† Baptismalogia.

The above quotations from the writings of the most eminent Pædobaptists, fully demonstrate that immersion was the ancient and universal practice of the Christian church in the administration of Baptism; and that it is *the mode* which is still most agreeable to the meaning of the word, the spirit of the commission, and the design of the institution. After such concessions, how truly pitiable it is to see Protestants torturing the language of Scripture, to extort evidence in favour of a popish innovation — an innovation which the church of Rome candidly confesses to be founded on human tradition. Well might Dr. Campbell express his regret that “the generality of protestant translators have shown less veneration for the style of the Greek text, than the popish translators have for that of the Vulgate.” In fact, the Papists are willing to admit the truth of those scriptural statements, which so many Protestants are either ashamed or afraid to own; “That Christ was baptized *in* the river Jordan,” and that “Philip and the Eunuch went down *into* the water;” nor have *they* any thing to fear from this avowal, since they do not rest infant sprinkling upon any command or example in the New Testament, but upon the tradition and practice of the church; which they hold to be of equal authority with the Scriptures. And can Protestants; with all their ingenuity, obtain for this favourite rite a higher precedent than the

church of Rome? Let the church of Rome speak for herself, on this subject, in the person of one of her Bishops; — “Indeed *Protestants are found* to have recourse to the *tradition of the church*, for determining a great number of points which are left doubtful by the sacred text, particularly with respect to the two sacraments which they acknowledge. From *the doctrine and practice of the church alone* (the church of Rome) they learn, that although *Christ our pattern* was baptized *in a river*, (Mark i. 9.) and the Ethiopian Eunuch was led by St. Philip *into the water* (Acts viii. 38.) for the same purpose; yet the application of it by effusion or aspersion, is valid; and that although Christ says, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*,” (Mark xvi. 16.) *infants* are susceptible of the benefits of Baptism, *who are not capable of making an act of faith*: with what pretensions to consistency then can they reject her doctrine and practice in the remaining particulars,” &c. ? *

Hence we see that infant sprinkling is acknowledged to be a human ordinance, taken from the tradition and practice of the most corrupt church in the world! Could it have been found in any of the precepts of Christ, could it have been deduced from the practice of the Apostles, could it have been elicited by the laws of just criticism from any of those passages which relate

* See Dr. Milner's End of all Controversy, Letter 39.

to the ordinance of Baptism, would not the Romish clergy have discovered it ages ago, possessed as they were of all the necessary means, — and would they in that case have grounded their practice on tradition? In vain then do Protestants attempt to found their scheme of Pædobaptism on higher authority than that of the church of Rome; in vain do they try to explain away the true signification of the sacred text, in support of their hypothesis; and they may continue to argue from notions of expediency, fitness, and utility; yet after all, it remains, what the church of Rome says it is, *a rite founded on tradition*, and we know one who hath said, “Thus do ye transgress the commandment, and make the word of God of none effect, through your traditions.”

Thus we have shown by a combination of facts founded on the most satisfactory evidence, that the primitive churches practised immersion, and that a total immersion of the body in the water is the only legitimate mode of administering the ordinance of Christian Baptism. While supported in our opinion, as Baptists, by the canon of the New Testament, the practice of the Apostles, the order of the primitive churches, the records of ecclesiastical councils, the relicts of antiquity, and the concessions of the most distinguished scholars in every age, we cannot help smiling at the overweening conceit of certain modern Pædo-

baptists, who, in the face of facts the most stubborn, and of testimonies the most substantial, dare to affirm, that immersion is neither supported by the word of God, nor by the practice of the first churches, while sprinkling is of the earliest date, and of the highest authority.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

THE question we are about to discuss in the present Chapter, refers to an important part of the revealed will of Christ, stands intimately connected with the primitive constitution and order of the Christian church, and has been greatly obscured by the prevailing practice of sprinkling infants : for these reasons, it is needful that we should give the subject a minute consideration. We shall, therefore, in the examination of the evidence afforded us on this point of the controversy, deliver our sentiments with a freedom which we claim for ourselves, and with a candour which is due to the opinions of others.

We have already proved, on the united testimony of some of the most distinguished Pædobaptists, that to baptize is to dip ; that Baptism was performed among the first Christians by a total immersion of the body in water ; and, that this custom, which continued in the church more than twelve centuries, was at length exchanged for

sprinkling by the arbitrary authority of a self-created Hierarchy. Is it not then, more than probable, that the same despotic power which arrogated to itself a right to change the mode of Baptism, had, at some earlier period of its domination, taken a similar liberty with respect to the subjects of this ordinance?—for that these have been changed as well as the mode, there is every reason to believe. The total silence of the Scriptures on the subject of Infant Baptism; the evils which this practice has introduced into the church; the importance of this ceremony in the polity of every ecclesiastical establishment; and more especially the zeal with which it has been propagated by the venal priesthood of one of the most corrupt communities in the world; strongly indicate to us, that it is an invention of men, and not an ordinance of God.

To satisfy the reader on this point, and to convince those who differ from us, as Baptists, that our reasons for not baptizing infants are not so irrational as some affirm, and others believe; but that they have their foundation both in reason and in revelation, we shall endeavour to prove :

I. By ascertaining the true meaning of our Lord's command, and the relation it necessarily bears to the spiritual nature of his kingdom.

It is remarkable that the passage from which we derive our authority for baptizing believers,

is that from which our opponents attempt to deduce arguments for sprinkling infants. Either party may feel persuaded that the truth is on his side, yet one must be wrong; for it is impossible that the sacred text can authorize two systems so irreconcilably opposed to each other in principle, spirit, and consequences; nor can two rites which are at such extreme points of variance be both of divine appointment.

If it be contended that the words "teach all nations, baptizing them," include infants, yet do not the several particulars, mentioned by the other Evangelists, expose the fallacy of such an idea? Each of the historians, who has recorded the commission, exhibits some prominent feature of our Lord's command: let us harmonize their statements, and we shall find that the *subjects* of Baptism are as plainly designated as the ordinance itself. Matthew says, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; *teaching them* to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Mark says, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature; *he that believeth and is baptized*, shall be saved:" and though Luke does not mention Baptism, yet he clearly shows what was included in preaching the Gospel, for he informs us that the Lord commanded "repentance and remission of sins to be preached in his name,

among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." These writers agree as to the *substance* of Christ's command; only Mark and Luke mention some things which Matthew omits. He merely says, that the Apostles were to go and teach all nations; but Mark shows *how they were to teach them*, by "preaching the Gospel;" and Luke mentions the particular doctrines on which they were to insist, — "repentance and remission of sins through faith in the name of Jesus." Again, while Matthew says that they were to baptize as well as teach, Mark fills up the ellipsis by observing that the persons whom the Apostles were to baptize were *believers*. Thus the phrase "baptizing them," used by the former Evangelist, and so widely interpreted by Pædobaptists, is by Mark expressly limited to *them that believe*; and can therefore by no means be supposed to include all nations. In support of this opinion we observe that the pronoun *αυτους* *them* is masculine, and *does not agree* with *παντα τα εθνη*, *all nations*, which is neuter, but with *μαθητας*, *disciples*, a masculine noun, understood in connection with the verb *μαθητευσατε*, *make disciples*. "Go ye, therefore, make disciples among all nations, *baptizing them* (the disciples) in the name of the Father," &c.

Independent of the grammatical construction of this passage, which leads to a clear and natural interpretation of its meaning, nothing can be more preposterous than to imagine that our Lord

sent forth his Apostles to baptize whole nations, irrespective of their believing in his name; or that he intended by the command “teach all nations,” that his ministers should sprinkle the face of every child as soon as it is born, and thereby professedly constitute it a partaker of covenant blessings! We therefore contend that whatever inferences the Pædobaptists may draw in favour of their theory from the words of Matthew, they are rendered perfectly nugatory by the definite expressions of Mark, who restricts the ordinance of Baptism to believers only: nor can any system of reasoning, however specious, founded upon the principles of analogy, expediency, or the moral fitness of things, overthrow the objections which this Evangelist opposes to the practice of infant sprinkling, since he most unequivocally makes faith an essential condition of Christian Baptism.

The phrase *μαθητευσατε παντα τα εθνη*, used by Matthew, might have been rendered, *make disciples among all nations*. In doing which three things were enjoined upon the Apostles: First, they were to preach the Gospel with a view to the conversion of sinners unto God: Secondly, they were to introduce the converted into the church by Baptism: Thirdly, they were to instruct these baptized persons in all the duties of the Christian profession. This is so obviously and strictly the meaning of the passage, that it is acknowledged by most critical expositors.

Dr. Doddridge says: “I render the word *μαθητευσατε*, *proselyte*, that it may be duly distinguished from *διδασκοντες*, *teaching*, (in the next verse) with which our version confounds it. The former seems to import instruction in the essentials of religion, which it was necessary adult persons should know and submit to, before they could regularly be admitted to Baptism; the latter may relate to those more particular admonitions in regard to Christian faith and practice.”*

Dr. Whitby: “*μαθητευειν*, here, is to preach the Gospel to all nations, and to engage them to believe it, in order to their profession of that faith by Baptism; as seems apparent, First, from that parallel commission, Mark xvi. 15. “Go preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved:” Secondly, from the scripture notion of a disciple, that being still the same as a believer. If here it should be said that I yielded too much to the Antipædobaptists, by saying, that to be made disciples here, is to be taught to believe in Christ that so they might be his disciples; I desire any one to tell me how the Apostles could *μαθητευειν*, make a disciple of an heathen, or unbelieving Jew, without being *μαθηται*, or teachers of them; whether they were not sent to preach to those that could hear, and to teach them to

* See Fam. Exp. in loc.

whom they preached that Jesus was the Christ, and only to baptize them when they did believe this." *

Grotius: " Since there are two ways of teaching, the one, by introduction to the first principles — the other, by more extensive instruction: the former seems to be intended by *μαθητευσεν*, for that is, as it were, to bring into discipline, and is to precede Baptism; the latter is pointed out by *διδασκειν*, which is to follow Baptism." †

Mr. Poole's Continuators: " Go ye therefore and teach all nations. The Greek is *μαθητευσατε*, make disciples all nations; but that must be by preaching, and instructing them in the principles of the Christian faith; and Mark expounds it, telling us our Saviour said, ' Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature;' that is, to every reasonable creature capable of hearing and receiving it. I cannot be of their mind, who think that persons may be baptized before they be taught: we want precedents of any such Baptism in Scripture; though indeed we find precedents of persons baptized, who had but a small degree of the knowledge of the Gospel; but it should seem that they were all first taught that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and were not baptized till they professed

* See Comment. in loc.

† See Annot. in loc.

such belief; * and John baptized them in Jordan confessing their sins." †

Bishop Burnet observes: "The institution of Baptism, as it is a federal act of the Christian religion, must be taken from the commission that our Saviour gave to his disciples; to go preach and make disciples to *him* in all nations, (for that is the strict signification of the word,) baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. By the first teaching or making disciples, that must go before Baptism, is to be meant the convincing the world, that Jesus is the Christ, the true Messiah, anointed of God, with a fullness of grace and of the spirit without measure; and sent to be the Saviour and Redeemer of the world. And when any were brought to acknowledge this, then they were to baptize them, to initiate them into this religion by obliging them to renounce all idolatry and ungodliness, as well as all carnal and secular lusts, and then they led them into the water; and with no other garments but what might cover nature, they at first laid them down in the water, as a man is laid in the grave, and then they said these words, I baptize or wash thee in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: then they raised them up again, and

* Acts viii. 37.

† Matt. iii. 6. — See Annot. in loc.

clean garments were put on them : from whence came the phrase of being baptized into Christ's death, of being buried with him by Baptism into death : of our being risen with Christ, and of our putting on the Lord Jesus Christ ; of putting off the old man, and putting on the new." *

Venema : " Go, says our Lord to the Apostles, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. This is an excellent passage, and explains the whole nature of Baptism. Before persons were baptized, it was necessary for them to believe the preaching of the Apostles, which faith they were to profess in Baptism. For the word *μαθητευειν*, in the style of the New Testament, does not signify barely to admit into a school and instruction, but to admit after the doctrine is believed, and after a previous subjection to the fundamental laws of the school : *μαθητευειν τινα*, is to teach a person effectually, so that he may learn, obey, and receive the doctrine by faith. It includes, therefore, *ακουειν και μαθειν*, to hear, to understand, and to admit for true ; for *μανθανεειν*, to learn, signifies an idea distinct from *ακουσαι*, to hear." †

Baxter : " Go disciple me all nations, baptiz-

* See Exp. Art. 27.

† Disserta. Sac. lib. 2. cap. 14. sect. 6.

ing them. As for those that say they are disciplined by Baptism, and not before Baptism, they speak not the sense of that text, nor that which is true or rational, if they mean it as absolutely spoken : else why should one be baptized more than another ? This is not like some occasional historical mention of Baptism, but it is the very commission of Christ to his Apostles, for preaching, and baptizing, and purposely expresseth their several works, in their several places and order. Their first task is by teaching to make disciples, who are by Mark called believers — their second work is to baptize them, whereto is annexed the promise of their salvation — the third work is to teach them all other things which are afterwards to be learned in the school of Christ. To condemn this order is to renounce all rules of order ; for where can we expect to find it, if not here ? I profess my conscience is fully satisfied from this text, that it is one sort of Faith, even saving, that must go before Baptism, and the profession whereof the minister must expect.” *

The above quotations from the writings of some of the most eminent and learned Pædobaptist divines, plainly prove their agreement with us, that the word μαθητεῖν signifies to make disciples by convincing men of the truth of Christianity, and bringing them over to the faith of

* See Booth's Pædobap. Exam.

Jesus — it is not Baptism that makes disciples, but instruction in the doctrines of the Gospel. Baptism is the outward ceremony by which we testify our faith in Christ, and our willingness to submit to his authority. The command says, “teach and baptize,” not “baptize and teach ;” or what is too frequently the case, baptize children in their infancy, and omit to teach them when they come to years of understanding. This explanation of our Lord’s commission is supported by the testimony of the early Christian Fathers, by the most learned expositors of modern times, and what is of infinitely higher importance, by the whole authority and analogy of the sacred Scriptures.

The commission enjoins two distinct acts, teaching, and baptizing; and the Apostles most certainly understood this to be the case; for in conformity with the order of our Lord’s command, they first instructed their hearers in the principles of the Gospel, and then baptized them on a profession of their faith in its doctrines. Nor do we find a single instance in the New Testament where Baptism either preceded Christian instruction, or was substituted in the room of it. It remained for the advocates of Pædobaptism, in a subsequent age, to discover, that by the admirable virtue of baptismal water human nature became regenerated; and that, when *ministerially applied*, it at once constituted its subjects spi-

ritual characters, and entitled them, though destitute of faith and repentance, to all the privileges of the Christian church. In perfect accordance with this primary feature of Infant Baptism, we hear some of its modern defenders affirm, “that when Christ commissioned his disciples to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” he meant nothing more than that every human being should be baptized, or, according to the modern acceptation of the term, should be sprinkled as soon as it came into the world, and be thus constituted a member of Christ, and a partaker of all Christian benefits. Thus Mr. M. Henry expresses himself: “If it be the will and command of the Lord Jesus Christ that all nations should be disciplined by Baptism, and children, though a part of all nations, are not excepted, then children are to be disciplined by Baptism. I SAY DISCIPLINED BY BAPTISM, for that is plainly intended by the words of the institution,* *μαθητευσατε βαπτιζοντες*, admit them disciples by baptizing them, as was shewed before. The command is to disciple them; baptizing is the mode of executing that command, and all nations are to be disciplined.”

The sentiments of Dr. Williams on this subject are expressed with equal latitude, and in language not less objectionable. His words are :

* Matt. xxviii. 19

“ Upon the most equitable ground, therefore, it would be absurd to suppose the disciples understood the words of the commission of adults only. This being the case, nothing can be admissible in evidence against Pædobaptist principles, from this or any other text, which does not reject and excommunicate infants in the most express and unequivocal manner. *I say excommunicate*, for can it be any thing short of this, *when the whole species of infants is cut off from the church militant at one blow?* Before we accede to such a step, is it not proper to pause — to pause again — and to enquire with holy alarm, on what ground are they excluded from the church on earth, who are confessedly admitted to glory, dying in their infant state?” In another place this writer observes: “ Hence we further argue, — if the discipling be such as may comprehend a nation, *nay all the nations*, as it certainly is (except Christ command an impossibility), then it is such as cannot agree to that specific mode of discipling which is affected by teaching exclusively. For on Antipædobaptist principles what tolerable propriety can there be in making all nations the objects of discipleship! According to them, the term *nation* must have a very singular acceptation indeed; for, in the first place, they must exclude from it all infants and young children; and in the next place, they would exclude all adults, except the few, com-

paratively the very few, who are deemed by them fit subjects of Baptism. Well, when they have taught them, few as they may be, they may say that the nation is disciplined! Does not such an interpretation militate against the plain and natural use of terms, and bid defiance to the force of language? On our principles it may be some time first before a nation be disciplined; but on our opponents', no nation ever can be."*

The above statements shew how far an attachment to a favourite hypothesis may lead men from the tendency of their principles, and the spirit of their creeds. That such notions should be held by Protestant Dissenters is to us very surprising; but that they should be publicly advocated by Calvinistic divines is still more astonishing. If the positions advanced by these writers be true, and the reasonings they have founded upon them be consequential, they prove what, I presume, no Calvinistic Dissenter is ambitious to do—that the priesthood of the Hierarchy are the only men who have either fully understood, or faithfully observed the apostolic commission, since they baptize all indiscriminately, and turn whole nations into Christian churches by the application of baptismal water, independent of their being instructed in the truths of the Gospel, or renewed in their minds by the power of divine grace.

* See vol. 1. p. 320, 321—328.

We cannot see with what propriety the persons who hold such opinions can object to a national church, as repugnant to the spirit and constitution of the Redeemer's kingdom, since their own principles carried into practice would necessarily produce that fearful and anomalous combination of good and wicked men which is one of the worst features in the church of England, and which constitutes one of our strong reasons for dissenting from her worship. To prove what we affirm, we have only to pursue the arguments of our opponents to the point to which they directly lead us, and we see at once a church founded on the same principles, and composed of similar materials. Mr. Henry says: "The command is to disciple; — baptizing is the mode of executing that command; — and all nations are to be so disciplined. I say by Baptism." And Dr. Williams asserts: "That previous teaching is not essential to discipleship. That the discipling in the commission comprehends a whole nation, nay all the nations, therefore Christ's command cannot agree to that specific mode of discipling which is affected by teaching. That on the principles of the Pædobaptists, it may be some time before a nation be disciplined; but on the principles of the Baptists no nation ever can be!"

If words have any meaning, and we are capable of comprehending the meaning of the words

here employed, it amounts to this — that individuals, families, yea, whole nations, are to be disciplined or *converted* to Christ by Baptism (for as Calvinistic Dissenters we know of no real discipleship to Christ upon New Testament principles that is not founded in a real conversion unto God. See Matt. iii. 7—13.; John iii. 3—9.; Luke xiv. 25—28.) — that the method pursued by the Baptists, of first teaching the people, and then requiring of them a credible evidence of their faith in Christ, before they are admitted into the church as his acknowledged disciples, is too rigid a system to comport either with the latitude of our Lord's commission, the nature of his kingdom, the doctrines of divine grace, or the principles of dissent. And that, finally, since a whole nation cannot be disciplined to Christ by a Baptism founded upon a work of grace on the heart, without which work the ordinance is of no value whatever; Pædobaptism, which requires neither a previous instruction, nor an accompanying attestation of the subject's belief in any one doctrine of the Gospel, is the only possible and legitimate way of executing our Lord's commission.

The men who hold these sentiments cannot in justice to their principles stop here: following the natural course of their own reasoning, and regulating their practice as Pædobaptists by it, they must ultimately arrive at that very point

where both Papists and Episcopalians have taken their stand; that very point whence sprung the Hierarchy itself, the heaviest scourge that ever afflicted the church of God. For admitting, as is affirmed, “that the whole species of infants have a right to be inducted into the church on earth by Baptism, and that this right is founded on the words of the commission;” it then follows, as a natural consequence, that those who carry Infant Baptism to its utmost possible extent act most agreeably with the divine command, though in thus discipling a whole nation, they are necessarily establishing a national worldly church in the true and strict sense of the term.

But before we submit to the bold measures of our opponents, and consent to have the whole race of infants brought into the church by a mere outward ceremony, it surely “becomes us to pause” — “to pause again” — “and to enquire with holy alarm” — how will such a measure affect the interests of pure and undefiled religion, and what revolution is it likely to produce in the constitution and order of the Redeemer’s kingdom? We therefore ask, First, does the commission authorize the ministers of the Gospel to disciple all nations “by baptizing the whole species of infants?” Secondly: are those who thus receive Baptism in their infancy strictly and truly disciplined to Christ in the scriptural sense of the term? Thirdly: to what religious

community on earth do they belong, and what are their distinctive rights and privileges as church members? Fourthly: How does this scheme of universal discipleship accord with the doctrines which Christ and his Apostles taught respecting the sovereignty of divine grace in the election of a people to everlasting life; the particular application of the blessings of redemption; and the final perseverance of all who are taken into covenant with God? These questions are highly important, not merely as bearing upon the present controversy, but as affecting in no inconsiderable degree the principles on which the Calvinistic Dissenters stand.

In reply to the first of these questions, which involves the principal point in debate, we affirm: That the commission issues no warrant to baptize infants, nor even to disciple nations by Baptism alone: and, moreover, that it was never the intention of Christ and his Apostles to countenance the practice of Infant Baptism. The total silence which all the inspired writers have observed on this subject cannot be accounted for upon any other principle than that they were entirely ignorant of any such custom. Besides which, when we consider the nature of the rite itself, the consequences to which it has led, and ever will lead so long as moral causes and consequences maintain their natural and mutual relation to each other, we stand doubly confirmed

in this our opinion. We believe that the *rite of incorporation* belongs to the church itself; and that the church of Christ as a spiritual body is invested with full authority to receive and to excommunicate, being guided in its judgment by the plain prescriptive dictates of divine truth. But Pædobaptism at once conveys this prerogative to the ministers of religion, and secures to them the power of making who they please members of the church independent of the voice of the people. A ceremony that transfers to the clergy a privilege which Christ conferred on the members of his church, can never be viewed in any other light than an episcopal innovation, and a most dangerous one too; since, by concentrating the power in the hands of a particular class of men, it must necessarily abridge, if not ultimately destroy, the liberties of the whole community. The men who thus saw that they had the power of making churches, would readily conceive that they had the right to govern them, and that the office of legislation rested solely with themselves, both in the enactment of laws, and in the appointment of teachers. Here, then, we trace the rise of the Hierarchy itself, the very first principle in the constitution of which is Infant Baptism. This rite is every way suited to the spirit and policy of a church, which is more ambitious to acquire dominion than to propagate the truth, and to live in affluence rather than to exemplify

the self-denying virtues of Christianity ; inas-much as it tends to exalt her priesthood, to increase her revenues, and to maintain that predominating influence which for ages she has acquired over the nations of the earth.

Much as this state of things may be deplored, it cannot in justice be condemned by our Pædobaptist Dissenting brethren, since it is but the natural result of a more extensive application of their own theory. For if the commission authorizes the discipling of all nations by baptizing the whole species of infants, the act is quite as valid, and the result as effectual in the hands of a Popish, an Episcopalian, or a Presbyterian Clergyman, as when performed by a Dissenting Minister : and if infants are thus inducted into the church militant, they necessarily stand related, as members, to some visible community where they are entitled to equal privileges with the whole body, on the ground of their real *scriptural* discipleship.* To what Christian community then do they belong as a matter of right, or in consequence of their Baptism, but to that very community to which the minister himself belongs who has administered to them the rite of initiation, and who afterwards claims them as a species of ecclesiastical property.† We

* See Rom. xii. 4, 5. ; 1 Cor. xii. 12—23.

† “ Ecclesiastical Property.” The spirit of the present, no less than the history of past times, proves, that the clergy of those churches which are by law established as the religion of the state,

fully grant that upon the principles of Pædobaptism whole nations may be proselyted to popery,

consider themselves as possessing an exclusive right to a spiritual dominion over the subjects of these realms; and that any interference on the part of other religious instructors, is regarded by them as an unwarrantable encroachment upon their ecclesiastical property and jurisdiction.

If we enquire into the ground of this supposed right, we shall find from the writings of ecclesiastics, that it is Infant Baptism, which, by its universal application, brings the people of a whole kingdom under the controul of a priestly domination.

In proof of this, we refer our readers to the pastoral letter lately put forth by the Rev. Edward Irving, in which that reverend gentleman, in the name and on the behalf of the Holy Mother Kirk, and the Reverend Fathers of the Presbytery of Scotland, very modestly claims the souls and bodies of about 100,000 Scotchmen, who, having left their native land in quest of something better, have, according to his account, sadly missed their way on this side the Tweed, and “are now scattered and lost in this great thoroughfare of Mammon.” He observes: “Of the tens of thousands of our countrymen, and their children, and their descendants, residing in this city and neighbourhood (of whom it is reckoned not less than a hundred thousand have received Baptism at the hand, and are thereby members of the Scottish church, for whose souls she is responsible), not one thousand present themselves at the table of the Lord, to renew their baptismal covenant, and join themselves to the body of Christ, for their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.” How many there may be who have departed from their mother church and fallen away to other communions, we are unable to say; but we have reason to believe that they are not many; and how many soever they may be, well knowing that such a step is seldom taken in the spirit of faith and piety, we cannot contemplate it with much satisfaction. — “Oh brethren! children of our mother, bear with us; for we are your pastors, sent hither to recall you to the fold of grace, to gather you to the flock of the redeemed: and we magnify our office. Bear with our boldness and our rebukes; for we stand between God and your souls: you are our children by Baptism, and we are responsible for your instruction. But under our pastoral care we find you not: we know not whether you be wandered and gone; we are come out to seek you over the mountains of wickedness in the midst of which we dwell: and this is our voice lifted up unto you, which may God bring unto your ears.”

or to any other religious establishment ; but we deny that they are thus constituted the disciples

Through the whole of this pastoral letter we trace the spirit of priestly authority, couched in the affected language of lamentation over the low state of religion among the Scotch in London ; but which, in fact, is the language of complaint on account of the decay of the high kirk prerogatives, which bid fair to be engulfed, not as Mr. I. insinuates, in the wickedness of this most wicked city, but in the growth of principles that are more compatible with religious liberty than are the laws of presbyteries and synods. We very much doubt the correctness of this gentleman's statement, when he ascribes the lack of zeal on the part of his countrymen for their national religion, to the licentious manners of the British metropolis. It is a well known fact, that many of the Scottish youths who are led to " this seat of mammon," (rather land of promise,) under the hope of obtaining either literary or commercial employment, come deeply tinctured with the principles of northern infidelity. The indifference which such characters manifest to the communion of the church of Scotland, does not spring from a recent moral contamination, received by mixing with the inhabitants of London, but from a total want of religion on their part, or from what is much worse, a settled and determined hostility to all religions, imbibed in their own country, and acted upon in this : where, freed from the restraints imposed by parental authority, on the one hand, and by the sombre manners of the Scottish nation, on the other, they give full scope to principles which would speedily create, where they could not find, a vortex for their own licentious indulgence. We just ask this reverend divine, whether these are the lost sheep of the true fold of Christ, after which he makes such a tremendous bleating ? Whether these are the dear children of the venerable and holy mother kirk, over whom he weeps and wails, and for whom he lifts up his voice, " to recall them to the fold of grace, and to gather them again with the flock of the redeemed ?"

" These brainless wits ! these baptized infidels !

These worse for mending ! wash'd to fouler stains !"

If so, we deeply mourn over the hapless condition of that gospel minister, who is thus doomed to endure a perpetual crucifixion, between his own native Arminian principles, and his professed Calvinistic creed ; and who, as a shepherd of Israel standing upon " the mountains of iniquity to gather the flock of the Redeemer," is so blinded by his attachment to a national presbytery, as to become

of Christ in the Scriptural sense of the term, or that they are entitled to any of the privileges

wholly incapable of discriminating between Christ's sheep, and the Devil's goats, but calls all alike, to house and browse together.

The spirit of arrogant assumption, and the affectation of superior zeal, which are worked up with the peculiar Scotch raciness of this Epistle, by which we smell, taste, and see the soil from whence it came, present an odd mixture of Popish intolerance and Presbyterian cant. The uncourteous, not to say the contemptuous, manner in which Mr. I. speaks of those Christian churches, with which some of the more pious of the Scotch have united themselves, and the broad insinuation he throws out of the injury which their souls are likely to sustain by their falling away from the kirk of Scotland to other communions, bring to our recollection some lines of Spencer: —

“ Is not thilk same *goatherd* proud,
That sits on yonder bank,
Whose straying herd themselves doth shroud
Among the bushes rank?
And being down, is trod in dirt
Of cattle, and browsed, and sorely hurt.”

Whatever fears this reverend divine may entertain respecting the welfare of some of his stray sheep, we can inform him for his spiritual comfort, that many of them have had their fleeces washed, and are now comfortably housed, well fed, and carefully superintended by pastors of other folds; and from what little we know of their appetites, we think that all his hooting will never induce them to quit their spiritual Goshen to browse the coarse and stunted herbage which lies thinly scattered upon the misty mountains of Presbyterian bigotry and intolerance.

This writer, in one part of his pastoral Epistle, deploras, in most piteous strains, the rapid decline of Presbyterianism in England; and that his dear and venerable mother kirk, stripped of her state attire, only exhibits the shadow of her former power and glory. Mr. Irving's acquaintance with Ecclesiastical History should remind him, that the severe grinding which the Dissenters of olden times endured between the millstones of state establishments, has perpetuated among them a tremulous remembrance of the bitter sufferings they endured, from the intolerant insolence of the Papists under the reign of the Tudors, and of the Presbyterians under the dominion of the Stewarts; and that they as much dread, at the present day, the opacity of a thorough Scotch mist, as they do the glare of a Popish bonfire

of that kingdom into which, our Lord has most solemnly declared, "that no man can enter except he be born of water and of the Spirit."

Under the Old Testament the Jews as a nation were taken into a temporary and external covenant with God; and they all stood related to each other as members of his Church, having received in their flesh the rite of circumcision, which was the distinctive mark of Judaism; though multitudes of them were disaffected to him in their hearts, and lived and died in unbelief. But under the New Testament dispensation such a constitution of things is opposed, as repugnant to the spiritual nature of the gospel church, of which none can become true members but those who are chosen, called, and sanctified of God. The stern decisive language of John the Baptist was sufficient to convince the Jews, that the economy which was then about to be introduced would not allow of that universal induction to its privileges which had prevailed under the law, where the difference of character in men made no difference in their relation to the church.* To the same purpose are the solemn declarations of our Lord in his conversation with Nicodemus,† and with the woman of Samaria, ‡ to whom he said, "the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship

* Matt. iii. 7—12.

† Joh. iii. 3—7.

‡ Joh. iv. 20—25.

him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The more attentively we read the writings of the Apostles, the more clearly shall we perceive, that when speaking of those who are the members of Christ's church, and who are entitled to all the privileges and blessings of the covenant of grace, they describe them, as being "renewed in the spirit of their minds." * "Born of God." † "Partakers of faith in Christ." ‡—as having the spirit of Christ." § "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness." || And as "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." ** In strict accordance with these views, we find the various reformed churches, when stating, in their public Confessions of Faith, the nature and constitution of the Gospel church, describe it as a society of holy persons, called out of the world, and devoted in heart and life to God. For instance, the Confession of Helvetia: "A church, that is, a company of the faithful, called and gathered out of the world; a communion, I say, of all saints, that is, of all them who do truly know, and rightly worship, and serve the true God in Jesus Christ the Saviour."—Confession of Basil: "We believe a holy Christian church, that is, a communion of saints, a gathering together of the faithful in spirit which is holy, and

* Eph. iv. 23. Col. iii. 10.

† Gal. iii. 26.

|| Phil. i. 11.

† Joh. i. 13. 1 Pet. i. 3.

§ Rom. viii. 9.

** Act. ix. 31.

the spouse of Christ ; wherein all they be citizens which do truly confess that Jesus is the Christ, the lamb that taketh away the sins of the world, and do shew forth that faith by the works of love.”— Confession of the French churches : “The Church is a company of the faithful, which agree together in following the word of God, and in embracing pure religion.” To the same purpose, yet more explicit, is the language of that celebrated champion of the Reformation, Monsieur Claude. “The true church of Jesus Christ, that is to say, not that multitude of men who make profession of Christianity, or who live in the same external society of religion, but the truly faithful, those holy men whom God has inwardly regenerated by his Spirit, and whom he leads to life everlasting. It is of this church that it is said, that she is the body of Jesus Christ. Eph. i. 23. That there is one body and one spirit. Eph. iv. 4. That Jesus Christ is her head. Eph. v. 23. That she is his spouse. Hos. ii. 19. It is only of the truly faithful, and no otherwise, that these promises are verified.” *

The Confession of Augsburg : “To speak properly, the church of Christ is a congregation of the members of Christ ; that is, of the saints, which do truly believe and rightly obey Christ.” Church of England : “The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which

* Claude’s Defen. of Reformation, par. 1. chap. 6.

the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."—The church of Scotland: "The Catholick or Universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the Elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

Thus we learn from the united testimony of the reformed churches, as expressed in their printed formularies, that the true church of Christ is not a national body, like the Jewish church, but a certain number known to God as chosen, called, and sanctified by him. Upon this principle, which agrees with the Gospel description of our Lord's kingdom, there can be no union and communion of saints one with another, that is not founded in a union with Christ. Consequently where there is no union to him, there can be no claim to the privileges of church-membership: for how can they be united to the members who have no union to the head?

The system of comparison which some have instituted between the Old and the New Testament churches, and the train of analogical reasoning they have pursued as founded upon it, have tended to introduce a vast deal of darkness and confusion into the minds of men respecting the

nature of Christ's kingdom. Proceeding upon the principles of the Sinaitic dispensation, which gave to the unconverted a right to the external privileges of the Abrahamic covenant, a certain class of writers affirm, that the Gospel dispensation is constituted precisely on the same plan, by opening the door of church-membership and giving the seals of the covenant to those who know not God, and who are destitute of the requisite qualifications for the right participation of them. To reconcile to the dictates of reason and propriety, a practice which stands in such direct opposition to the spirit and letter of the Gospel, we are told that the Gospel contains an external as well as an internal covenant, and that Christ has a visible as well as an invisible church in this world, over which he presides ; into the first of these many may be admitted who have no right and title to the second. By this mode of reasoning, as dangerous to the souls of men as it is injurious to the cause of true religion, do the principal advocates of Pædobaptism lay the foundation for a corrupt, worldly, profane church. On this point the celebrated Dr. John Erskine has expressed himself in language more accordant with our views than any writer we recollect. " Many, however, maintain, that an external covenant subsists under the Gospel, by which professors of Christianity, though inwardly disaffected to God and goodness, are entitled to

certain outward blessings, and church privileges. The common distinction of the church into visible and invisible, or at least the incautious manner in which some have explained it, has contributed not a little to the prevalence of this opinion. But let us impartially examine whether it has any solid foundation in the sacred oracles ; and for this purpose inquire, whether the proofs of such an external covenant under the Old Testament, will equally apply to Gospel times. If there is an external church, essentially different from the internal, and consisting of different members, then Christ has two churches in the world, and is the head of two mystical bodies. But if the same persons, and none else, are members of the visible and invisible church, then hypocrites are really members of neither, though from our ignorance of their hypocrisy they may be accounted such. Of old, indeed, God had two different kinds of people, the natural descendants of Abraham and his spiritual seed ; Jews outwardly, and Jews inwardly ; those born after the flesh and those by the promise. But now the slaves of sin are no more a part of God's family, John viii. 35. ; those born after the flesh are cast out of the church, Gal. iv. 23—30. ; and he only is Abraham's seed, and a Jew in the New Testament sense of the word, who is one inwardly, walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham, and doing his works, (for circumcision is

that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.) Joh. viii. 39. Heb. ii. 16. Rom. ii. 28, 29. iv. 12. ix. 6—8. As the Prophets foretold, God has now but one people, who are all holy and circumcised in heart. Isai. iv. 3. xxxv. 8. lii. 1. liv. 13. lx. throughout. Ezek. xlv. 9. But error is best displayed by setting in a just light the opposite truth. Scripture sufficiently proves, that the sacraments of the New Testament are signs and seals of no other covenant, than that covenant of grace which secures eternal happiness to all interested in it. And the partaking of them manifestly implies a partaking of covenant blessings on the one hand, and the exercise of faith on the other.—To begin with Baptism. John baptized for the remission of sins, and so did Christ's disciples. We are told that Baptism saves us, and by Baptism we are said to put on Christ, to die, to be buried, and to rise with him.* Because the water in Baptism represents and seals that blood of Jesus, which cleanseth from the guilt of sin, and procures for us the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, and all other needful blessings. Baptism, then, is a seal of spiritual blessings. And spiritual blessings it cannot seal to the unconverted.—“ But, perhaps, Baptism is no more than a badge of our Christian profession, ingrafting men into the visible church, giving them certain

* Mar. i. 4. Act. ii. 28. 1 Pet. iii. 21. Gal. iii. 7. Rom. vi. 4. Col. ii. 12.

outward privileges, and vesting them with the honourable title of children of the kingdom. It comes in the room of circumcision. May it not, therefore, be intended for similar purposes?" That it came in the place of circumcision, I allow, in so far as circumcision was a seal to real saints of the righteousness of Faith, not in so far as it sealed external privileges to all the Jews, and was a badge of distinction between them and other nations. Baptism has none of these properties, which render circumcision a fit sign and seal of an external covenant. Circumcision impressed an abiding mark, was the characteristic of Judaism; belonged to all Jews, however differing in opinion or practice; and those born of a Jew, even when come to age, were entitled to it. Whereas, Baptism impresses no abiding mark. A profession and suitable practice, not Baptism, is the characteristic of Christianity. If the unconverted have a right to any blessing in the covenant of grace, it must be either from their descent, their profession, their faith, or their obedience. Birth confers no such right. Does then a bare profession of Christianity give a real right to any covenant blessing? It were strange, indeed, if God should thus reward what he has severely prohibited. Psal. l. 16, 17. The right of the unconverted to covenant blessings cannot flow from faith, because the unconverted are destitute of that grace. Nor can it flow from their obedience, for

only that obedience which springs from faith is accepted of God. That unconverted professors of Christianity may be free from gross vices, I doubt not. But so too may gross infidels. And yet none will pretend on that account, that they are separated from the world, and devoted to God. The two sacraments are the only rites of divine institution binding upon Christians. And they are purely signs and seals annexed to the covenant of grace, and therefore of no benefit to men not interested in that covenant. They are intended to seal a covenant, not to make one. The unconverted have neither right to these seals, nor disposition to use them for the purposes of their institution. When Paul says, 2 Cor. v. 16. "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh." The meaning is, that now, under the Gospel, we regard no man as entitled to church privileges, either by descent, or by obedience to what is termed, (Heb. vii. 16.) "The law of a carnal commandment." *

We have given the above extracts because they enter deeply into the question under discussion. Their author, who was not less distinguished for his learning, than he was for his theological acumen, pursued the subject upon the principles of his creed, as a Calvinistic divine, and naturally arrived at conclusions which stood op-

* Dr. J. Erskine's Theolo. Dissert. The Character and Privileges of the Christian Church.

posed to his own practice as a Pædobaptist. Nor do we perceive how any man, entertaining scriptural views of the nature of a Gospel church, could conscientiously have come to any other result. The church of Christ we believe to be, as stated in the principal reformed confessions of faith, “a society of holy men, called out of the world by divine grace, and devoted to God in heart and life:” and as such characters are raised up and multiplied in a nation, so in exact proportion, but no further, may that nation be said to be disciplined. The position, therefore, which Dr. Williams has advanced, appears to us like an immense excrescence adhering to his creed, which deforms and weakens his whole *system of Calvinistic theology*: for what room is there for the exercise of discriminating grace, when a whole nation is brought into covenant with God, not by the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts, but, by the application of a few drops of water to the face of every individual. Did Christ ever disciple, or convert a man to himself, merely by such a process? If not, it could never be the way in which he designed that his Apostles and Ministers should fulfil his commission, unless he intended that his kingdom should be composed of characters, similar to those which constitute the church of Rome. The part to which we particularly object in the Dr.’s statement, as involving a dereliction of principle,

we bring to the view of the reader again, that we may expose its fallacy. “*For on Antipædobaptist principles what tolerable propriety can there be in making all nations the objects of discipleship? According to them, the term nation must have a very singular acceptation indeed; for, in the first place, they must exclude from it all infants, and young children; and in the next place, they would exclude all adults, except the few, comparatively very few, who are deemed by them fit subjects of Baptism.—On our principles it may be some time first before a nation be discipled; but on our opponents’, no nation ever can be.*” *

Waving the consideration of our being Baptists in the examination of this remarkable passage, we shall try its merits by those principles on which we and our Independent brethren are agreed as Calvinistic Dissenters; and by which we are regulated in the admission of members into our respective churches. We, therefore, ask, was it ever the intention of God to bring more individuals into the covenant of grace in this world, than he designed to receive into glory in the next? Is it his wish, that persons destitute of those holy qualifications which flow from the gracious influences of his Spirit upon the heart, should be induced to believe that they have a covenant interest in Christ, when, in fact, they are lying under the curse of his law? Has God

* The reader had better refer to the whole passage. See pages 103, 104.

ever represented the remedy provided and published in the Gospel, as being of universal extent in its application, so that all and every one in the nations through which the Gospel is promulgated, are savingly interested in its blessings? If not, and the negative of these positions is the basis of the Calvinistic system, then it could never have been the will of God that men, destitute of faith, should be professedly united to him by the mere external use of Christian ordinances, unless he willed to make hypocrites. If the Dr.'s sentiments on this point be correct, the twenty years which he spent in preparing a vindication of the sovereignty of God, in the eternal election and particular redemption of a people to himself, was of very little use, since the hypothesis he here lays down destroys the particularity of redemption, by an universal application of the benefits and blessings of the Gospel. But if, as the Dr. affirms in his treatise on Divine Equity and Sovereignty, none but the elect are interested in the covenant of redemption, we then inquire, upon his own principles, what right have the non-elect to those ordinances, which are supposed to sign and seal to those who receive them, the blessings of that covenant? Upon the principles of our opponent, the universal administration of Baptism, as "a sealing rite," implies the universal communication of the benefit sealed. What then is it, that Baptism imparts to its subjects? Does

it seal to a whole nation grace and salvation? We will answer this question in the words of a Pædobaptist writer of no small celebrity among the Scotch Independents. "It is manifest, no nation of this world can, in a national capacity, be the subject of justification by faith; and of the promise of the Spirit which we receive through faith; and it is as certain that every person in the nations of the world is not to partake of this blessedness. What remains therefore, but that it should be those who are redeemed by Christ out of every nation? And thus we find out the intent of the writings of the prophets about the nations." * The charge which the Dr. throws out, "that upon Baptist principles no nation ever can be disciplined unto Christ," is grossly absurd. Will the advocates of this hypothesis dare to affirm, that God cannot gather his elect out of the nations as effectually by the instrumentality of Baptists, as he can by the labours of Pædobaptists? Or will they insinuate, that, that body of Christians which, acting upon the principles of the Calvinistic Dissenting system, close the door of the church against the intrusions of corrupt and unconverted men, is incompetent to carry into execution the commission which our Lord gave to his Apostles? If so, they must excuse us, if we pronounce them woefully ignorant of the nature and constitution of the Re-

* Glass's Works, vol. i. pag. 51, 52.

deemer's kingdom. The highest degree of success that ever accompanied the ministerial exertions of man, has never yet effected that mighty revolution in the moral condition of a nation, which Dr. W. says, is to be achieved upon Pædobaptist principles. Even in the days of the Apostles, when the greatest measure of divine influence was imparted, there was no one state or nation, that was, in its national capacity, so entirely blessed in Christ, that it might be said of all and every one, they were truly his disciples. Nor do we believe that this ever will be the case. That visible distinction which, from the beginning, has subsisted between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent, and the bitter controversy which has arisen out of it, will, we conceive, continue to manifest itself more or less to the very end of time. Luke xii. 49—53. But, to bring this seed of the serpent into the church of the living God, by stamping it with “the seals of the covenant of grace,” is to “make them two-fold more the children of the devil than they were before.” It is grace in the heart, and not “the seals of grace” in the flesh; conversion, and not outward ceremonies, that constitute men partakers of Christ. So fully sensible are our Independent brethren of the perilous consequences of such an amalgamation, to the purity and welfare of the church of God, that they, themselves, would most determinately reject nine-tenths of

that vast mass of ecclesiastical material which constitutes the national establishment of this country. Yet let them recollect, that this mass, corrupt as it is, is formed and accumulated by the constant operation of their own principles as Pædobaptists. Surely, then, that ceremony which has been the cause of filling every nation in Christendom with such a host of worldly, formal, hypocritical professors, can never be the mean which God has appointed for the conversion of the nations unto himself.*

* "Popery is the religion of depraved human nature. What Toplady said of Arminianism is applicable to it. Every man is born a Papist. He is born not only in a state of alienation from God, but with an innate propensity to trust in himself, or in something done by himself, or by fellow creatures, to obtain the favour, or remove the displeasure of God. Christianity reveals a Saviour, who has obeyed and suffered in the room of the guilty; who has, in short, done every thing that was necessary to reconcile sinners to their offended Creator: and every sinner who believes in him is so reconciled. This reconciliation, however, is necessarily and invariably accompanied by a radical change in the character, as well as in the state of the individual. *He becomes a new creature. He commences a new and spiritual life*;—or, to use the emphatical words of our Saviour, he is *born again*: and without this no man can see the kingdom of God. The future life of such a person is characterized by a hatred of sin, and a daily opposition to it, in all its motions and operations in his own heart, together with a love of righteousness, and an earnest desire to please and serve God. It requires nothing less than the power of the Holy Spirit to produce this change: and nothing short of this will be recognized by the Righteous Judge as real Christianity.

"But Popery can do very well without any change in either the state or character of persons who submit to the discipline of their ghostly fathers. By the sacrament of Baptism, a priest can regenerate a sinner. This is all the change he is taught to seek; he is told that by Baptism all his sins are taken away, and he is reconciled to God. By the sacrament of penance, all the sins committed after Baptism are forgiven: and by extreme unction, when he comes to die, he is

The extent of the remedy brought to light in the Gospel, in its application to sinners, is limited by the terms prescribed in its publication. The commission which our Lord gave to his Apostles enjoined the preaching of repentance and remission of sins in his name among all nations. How they executed this commission, we learn from their own words. “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”—“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”—“I testify,” saith Paul, “both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.” *

The explicit manner in which the Scriptures insist upon the necessity of faith and repentance as pre-requisites to Baptism, led to that vicarious

assured of everlasting happiness.”—(See *The Protestant*, vol. i. p. 81, 82.)

Does not the state of things in those Protestant countries, which boast the purity of their reformed churches, bear too close a resemblance to the above affecting picture of Popish delusion and hypocrisy: and can Dissenters, who boast a still higher degree of purity in the constitution and worship of their churches, be found pleading for a rite, which lies at the foundation of this widely extended scene of mischief and iniquity? Greatly as we need, and much as we may desire a reformation in the state of Religion, it is not reasonably to be expected, till there is on our part a return to the primitive simplicity of Gospel truths and ordinances. “Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts.”—Mal. iii. 7.

* Act. iii. 19.—xvi. 31.—ii. 38.—xx. 21.

profession which was resorted to by the first Pædobaptists, and which has attended the administration of this ceremony from its commencement to the present time. Dr. Wall remarks on this subject: "But the most material thing by far that was done at Baptism was *the professions*, the sincerity whereof is more to be regarded than the external Baptism itself, as St. Peter testifies, 1 Pet. iii. 21. They were constantly and universally required, in the case of grown persons, to be made with their own mouth in the most serious manner; and, in the case of infants, by their sponsors in their name. That a man may justly wonder at the spirit of contradiction in those people" (we presume Independents and Presbyterians), "that pretend Baptism does better without them, and do practise accordingly." And again, "There is no time or age of the church in which there is any appearance that infants were ordinarily baptized without sponsors or godfathers; and Austin calls the professions, words of the sacrament without which an infant cannot be baptized."* Thus then, according to the decided opinion of the great Historian of Pædobaptism, the Baptism of Independents and Presbyterians is invalid!

As this vicarious profession is one of the original, so it is one of the most absurd features of Pædobaptism. What can be more opposed to

* See Wall on Infant Baptism, part 1. chap. 9. p. 324. 353.

the dictates of reason, and the solemnities of religion, than the baptismal service of ecclesiastical establishments? When an infant is brought to a minister of the church of England to be baptized, he prays that “the infant coming to his holy Baptism may receive remission of sins by spiritual regeneration; that God, according to his promise, would give to those who ask, let them that seek, find, and open the gate unto them that knock; that this infant may enjoy the everlasting benediction of his heavenly washing, and come to his eternal kingdom.” Then *he addresses the sponsors*, “Ye have brought this child here to be baptized. As Christ will most surely keep and perform his promise, this infant must also faithfully for his part, promise by you that are his sureties (until he come of age to take it upon himself), that he will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God’s holy word, and obediently keep his commandments: I demand therefore, dost thou in the name of this child renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, and the carnal desires of the flesh, &c.?” To which they severally reply, “*I will renounce them.*” “Dost thou believe in God the Father and in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost?” “*All this I stedfastly believe.*” “Wilt thou be baptized in this faith?” “*This is my desire.*” Remember it is *the unconscious babe* who is about to be bap-

tized, and by the law of the church of England it is *he* that is required to profess faith in the Lord Jesus ; but because of his entire incapacity to fulfil this requirement she provides sponsors who present themselves as sureties to God for the faith and obedience of the child. Who, that was a stranger to this mysterious plan of substitution, would not conclude that the sponsors were the persons about to be baptized in the faith they had so solemnly professed ? Is not this lying in the presence of God ? Is it not trifling with his ordinance ? Is it not offering insult to the dignity of the Christian religion ? Yet this is called *holy Baptism*, and is professedly grounded upon the words of our Lord, “ Go ye, teach all nations, baptizing them ;” but do these words indeed countenance the practice of sprinkling babes on the faith of sponsors or of parents ? We would appeal to men of common sense ; let them decide this matter.*

* Dr. Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down, has decided this point against the custom of the church of England, with a force of reasoning which his brethren of the episcopacy have never been able to answer. Speaking of the council of Neocæsaria, in which a controversy took place, respecting the propriety of baptizing a woman with child, he says : — “ The canon speaks reason, and it intimates a practice which was absolutely universal in the church, of interrogating the catechumens concerning the articles of creed : which is one argument that either they did not admit infants to baptism, or that they did prevaricate egregiously in asking questions of them, who themselves knew were not capable of giving answer.

“ And to supply their incapacity by the answer of a godfather, is but the same unreasonableness acted with a worse circumstance : and there is no sensible account can be given of it ; for that which some imperfectly murmur concerning stipulations civil performed by

If this text proves any thing in favour of Pædo-baptism, it proves too much. If it can be shown that it contains a law for the Baptism of infants, undoubtedly the infants of all nations are included, Pagan and Mahometan, as well as Christians; and that system must be unjust and arbitrary which makes their right to this ordinance to depend upon the faith of parents or sponsors. “Teach all nations, *baptizing them*;” if it can be proved that this means “baptizing

tutors in the name of their pupils, is an absolute vanity: for what, if by positive constitution of the Romans, such solemnities of law are required in all stipulations, and by indulgence are permitted in the case of a notable benefit accruing to minors, must God be tried, and Christian religion transact her mysteries by proportion and compliance with the law of the Romans? I know God might, if he would have appointed godfathers to give answer in behalf of the children, and to be fidejussors for them; but we cannot find any authority or ground that he hath, and if he had, then it is to be supposed he would have given them commission to have transacted the solemnity with better circumstances, and given answers with more truth. For the question is asked of believing in the present. And if the godfathers answer in the name of the child, *I do believe*, it is notorious they speak false and ridiculously; for the infant is not capable of believing, and if he were, he were also capable of dissenting, and how then do they know his mind? And therefore Tertullian gives advice that the baptism of infants should be deferred till they could give an account of their faith; and the same also is the council of Gregory, bishop of Nazianzen, although he allows them to hasten it in case of necessity; for though his reason taught him what was fit, yet he was overborn with the practice and opinion of his age, which began to bear too violently upon him, and yet in another place he makes mention of some to whom baptism was not administered *διὰ νηπιότητα*, by reason of infancy; to which, if we add, that the parents of St. Austin, St. Jerome, and St. Ambrose, although they were Christian, yet did not baptize their children before they were 30 years of age, it will be very considerable in the example, and of great efficacy for destroying the supposed necessity or derivation from the Apostles.” See Dr. Jeremy Taylor of the Liberty of Prophesying, p. 340, 341.

the *infants* of all nations," why do not Pædobaptist missionaries make the sprinkling of babes the first object of their attention; why do they not bring all they can into the pale of the visible church, and bestow on them covenant blessings? It would be difficult to show, even upon their own ground, why some infants are thus favoured, and others excluded. Are not the children of all nations alike naturally and morally capacitated for Baptism? Do they not equally need the spiritual benefits said to be conveyed by this ordinance? Would it not be quite as effectual to the salvation of infants born in heathen lands, as to others? Should it be replied, that Baptism belongs to believers and their seed only (and this we know is said by many), we ask, why then in so many instances administer it to the offspring of unbelievers? If the children of merely nominal Christians in this country are fit subjects for Baptism, if the unbelief and immorality of their parents does not invalidate the ordinance to them, why should the children of Pagans, Mahometans, Jews, and infidels, be excluded from the benefits of this rite, in cases where it could be administered to them? We are at a loss to imagine upon what principle the seed of unbelievers in England, France, or Rome, are entitled to Baptism, more than the children of the heathen, seeing that their parents are alike enemies to God, and in a state of condemnation!

II. The persons whom the Apostles baptized as coming within the intention of our Lord's command.

Had the Baptism of babes been practised by Christ, or included in the commission, the Apostles would have left upon record some testimony of the fact: but in examining the history of apostolic Baptisms, *children are not once mentioned*. If the Apostles did baptize infants, how utterly unaccountable is this silence, in a history so minute, definite, and important, and in which the administration of this ordinance is recorded no less than nine times!

On the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached his memorable sermon;—"Now when *they heard this*, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins: and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Then *they that gladly received his word were baptized*." * Peter and the rest of the Apostles were now entering upon the work assigned them in the commission. *Mark how they began μαθητεύειν* to teach, or make disciples, *not by bap-*

* Acts ii. 38—42.

tizing, but by preaching: they proclaimed salvation through a crucified Saviour; they warned the Jews of their awful condition; they exhorted them to repent; and they *baptized those who believed*, to the number of three thousand. Observe what is said of those whom they baptized, “ they gladly received the word — they then continued stedfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer; and were continually in the temple, praising God.”

It is evident to a demonstration that the three thousand baptized on this occasion *were all of them adults*, for they are said to have performed acts of which infants are incapable. If then the infants of these converts were admitted to the ordinance on the faith of their parents, as Pædobaptists would induce us to believe, there must, upon a moderate calculation, have been *some thousands more baptized* than the Apostles have stated. How is this omission, which impeaches the accuracy of the historian, to be accounted for?

We are told that the Baptism of the children is expressly referred to in the 39th verse, where it is said “ the promise is unto you, and to *your children*;” and that in order to overthrow this decisive testimony in favour of Pædobaptism, we are compelled to have recourse to a “ most grossly absurd,” if not a wilful perver-

sion, of the sacred text. Now this absurd perversion of Scripture which is charged upon us, consists in our referring “the promise,” here spoken of, to the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost: but we are not the only persons who come under this charge: many Pædobaptist commentators have adopted the same heretical opinion.*

Dr. Doddridge, in a note upon this passage, says, “Considering that the gift of the Spirit had been mentioned just before, it seems most natural to interpret *this*, as a reference to that passage in Joel, which had been so largely recited above (verse 17, and fol.), where God promises the effusion of the Spirit on their sons and on their daughters; and accordingly, I have paraphrased the latter clause of this verse as referring to his extraordinary gifts; and the rather, as the sanctifying influences of the Spirit must have already been received, to prepare them for entering into the church by Baptism.”

And Dr. Whitby observes, “These words will not prove a right of infants to receive Baptism: the promise mentioned here, being that only of the Holy Spirit, mentioned in verses 16, 17, 18. and so relating only to the times of the miraculous

* “If any have made use of that very unconvincing argument (Acts ii. 39.) in support of Infant Baptism, I have nothing to say in defence of them. The word children *there*, is really the children of the Jews, and not peculiarly their infant children.” Dr. Hammond’s Works, vol. 1. p. 490.

effusion of the Holy Ghost, and to those persons who by age were made capable of those extraordinary gifts."

But if this application of the passage were peculiar to the Baptists, it does not merit the epithets employed against it: for it agrees with the event which had so recently transpired; with the grand subject of the Apostle's discourse; and with the order he pursues. The glorious manifestation of the Spirit to the church of God, was predicted as a distinguishing blessing of the new covenant: to this great and invaluable promise of the Father, Christ frequently referred in his discourse at the last supper; * and just before his ascension, he told his disciples to wait at Jerusalem for *this promise*, which, saith he, "ye have heard of me;" and Peter himself declares what he meant, by referring immediately to the gift of the Holy Ghost, as that which the Father had promised to bestow in the last days. v. 16, 17, 18, and 33.

But this opinion which, let it be remembered, is as prevalent among Pædobaptists, as among us, is nevertheless held up to public ridicule, as one of the false glosses by which we endeavour to weaken every species of evidence, which militates against our "darling hypothesis." "What can be more absurd," say our opponents, "than to suppose that the promise mentioned by Peter

* John, xiv. xv. xvi.

refers to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, when every one knows that infants are naturally and morally incapable of receiving and exercising such gifts?" True! but what Baptist ever supposed for a moment, that Peter had any reference whatever to unconscious babes? And who, that is not bent upon establishing a system, in defiance of plain truth and right reason, could find any thing about Infant Baptism in the words of this Apostle? The phrase "*καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις ὑμῶν and your children*" does not mean babes or infants, as the Independents say it does, when defending their practice of sprinkling children: *τέκνον* signifies a descendant, one of any degree of age or consanguinity, and not merely infants; indeed it will be found most generally to mean posterity. Thus, Matt. iii. 9.—“Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones *εγείραι τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ* to raise up a *posterity* to Abraham.” Matt. xxvii. 25.—“Then answered all the people and said, his blood be on us *καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν* and on our *posterity*.” Luke xxiii. 28.—“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, *καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν* and for your *posterity*.”* But the passage which serves to illustrate very strongly the one under consideration is Acts xiii. 32, 33.—“And we declare unto you glad

* See also John viii. 39.

tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the Fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us, τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῶν *their descendants*," certainly *not their infants*. So when it is said, "The promise is unto you, and to *your children*," it does not mean *your babes*, but *your descendants*, your *posterity*; and is happily expounded by the succeeding clause, "even as many," *not as shall be born*, but "even as *many of them* as the Lord your God *shall call*."

But how shall we account for the conduct of those who charge us so loudly with adopting an absurd interpretation for the support of our sentiments, when the most celebrated Pædobaptists themselves (such men as Hammond, Whitby, Limborch, &c.) pronounce the arguments taken from this text in favour of Infant Baptism to be entirely nugatory!

The next account of Baptism we meet with, is in Acts viii. 12: — "Then Philip went down to the City of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people, with one accord, gave heed unto the things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. And there was great joy in that city. But *when they believed* Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus, *they were baptized, men and women*."

Here we find Philip, like the Apostles, proceeding according to the rules of the commission.

He began by preaching the Gospel, and testifying to the Samaritans the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus; *when they believed* his word, he baptized them, both men and women. Surely it is evident that the ordinance of Baptism was restricted, on this occasion at least, to those who were of age to hear, understand and believe the Gospel; but according to the Pædobaptists, the seed of believers, the *children of those Samaritan converts*, must also have had a right to the ordinance, *and if so*, why did not Philip baptize them, or if he did, why is it not said that he baptized men, women, and *children*?

The fact is, that a *personal* profession of faith was an absolute condition of Christian Baptism; nor is there an instance recorded of any being baptized who were not capable of exercising and professing faith in the Lord Jesus. This was manifest in the case of the Eunuch; “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they (Philip and the Eunuch) went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the Eunuch said, see here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, *if thou believest* with all thine heart, thou mayest.” Here, as before, the Evangelist began with preaching Christ: and he did not baptize him, till he had professed faith in the Lord Jesus;—“I believe

that Jesus Christ is the Son of God ;” *then* “ Philip commanded the chariot to stand still, and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him.” We do not read of any other receiving the ordinance at this time ; neither children nor servants are said to have been baptized on the faith of this individual. *

* “ Considering how frequently bathing was used in those hot countries, it is not to be wondered that Baptism was generally administered by immersion ; though I see no proof, that it was essential to the institution. It would be very unnatural to suppose, that they went down to the water, merely that Philip might take up a little water in his hand to pour on the Eunuch. A person of his dignity had, no doubt, many vessels in his baggage, on such a journey through so desert a country ; a precaution absolutely necessary for travellers in those parts, and never omitted by them.” (Doddridge’s Exposit.) Unnatural as the above supposition may appear to a candid and judicious reasoner, yet we have heard it frequently affirmed by the advocates of Pædobaptism, that Philip led the Eunuch from his carriage down to the water side merely for the purpose of sprinkling him.

When Pædobaptists concede the point, that, in the first ages of the Christian Church, Baptism was administered by immersion, they do it on the ground of its being a mere matter of convenience, “ because the country was hot ;” as though the Apostles, like the modern Jesuits, consulted human convenience when enforcing the observance of divine laws. We grant that Palestine is a very hot country during the summer months ; and it is no less true, that its winters are sometimes excessively severe. “ Vinisauf, speaking of a consultation among the crusaders a few days after Epiphany, (January 6th,) 1192, whether they should make an attempt on Jerusalem, or postpone its recovery to a more advantageous time, he tells us, the Turks, who had shut themselves up in Jerusalem, were at that time, in a very distressed state, oppressed by excessive snow and hail, which melting, occasioned great torrents from the mountains, sweeping away their horses and cattle in droves, and killing others with the violence of the cold.” “ A few days after, it appears by the succeeding page, “ the cold was so severe at Ramula, whose situation is lower, and less exposed to the severity

In the 9th chapter of Acts, we have a record of the Baptism of Saul.—“And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his

of the weather, that the waters were so frozen as to make the travelling of beasts of burden very troublesome.—But the next morning's journey made them forget the difficulties of the preceding day: for the frozen snow driving in their faces, thick storms of hail descended with so much force as to rebound with violence; the rains occasioned such torrents, as that there appeared to be a concurrence of every circumstance that tended to overwhelm them.—In another place, speaking of the state of King Richard's Army in the months of November and December, when proceeding to the hilly part of the country towards Jerusalem, he informs us, that so vehement were the storms of wind, rain and hail, that the stakes of their tents were torn up, and carried to a distance, and that many of their horses perished through the severity of the cold.”—(See Harmer's Observations, vol. i. pag. 39, 40, 41.)

The accounts, which various travellers have given us of the occasional severity of the winters in Palestine, is borne out by many passages in the sacred writings. (See Ezra, x. 9. Psal. cxlvii. 16, 17. Jer. xxxvi. 22.) Notwithstanding the plea which is so frequently urged, against observing the primitive mode of baptizing, on account of the coldness of our climate, yet both Popish and Episcopalian Pædobaptists have for ages affirmed, that Jesus Christ was immersed in the river Jordan on the 6th of January, the coldest month in the Jewish calendar. Now, though we are willing to allow that the above date ascribed to our Lord's Baptism is merely a Popish legend, yet there are many reasons which induce us to believe that the Baptism of Christ took place in November, a month which is sometimes as wet and as cold in Judea, as it is in this country. The danger resulting from immersing the body in cold water *in our high latitude*, is never started but in reference to the ordinance of Baptism; nor is it, we will venture to affirm, seriously believed by those who start it. The constant practice of thousands and tens of thousands of our men, women and children, visiting the sea coasts annually for the purpose of dipping themselves, proves, that they apprehend no serious consequences from the custom. It is only when Baptism is resorted to as a religious ordinance, that it is cried down as an injurious practice. There must be a sad perversity in the mode of thinking and reasoning pursued by some men, that they should condemn *that* as dangerous, when performed in obedience to a divine command, which is allowed to impart vigour

hands on him, said, brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith, and arose and was baptized." This is additional evidence in favour of our opinion, that none but those who professed faith in Christ were baptized in primitive times; and that it was the indispensable duty of all who believed, to comply with the command "Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized."

We now proceed to examine the circumstances connected with the Baptism of Cornelius and his friends. Acts x. 34, &c. — "Then Peter opened his mouth and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, — he is Lord of all — that word I say you know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the Baptism which John preached: and he

and health to the constitution, when pursued as a matter of pleasure.

The reader who wishes to see the most probable date of our Lord's Baptism, may consult Lamy's Chronological Apparatus, and the learned inquiry into the true Chronology of our Saviour's Life. By the Rev. C. Benson, M. A.

commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify, that it is he who was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead ; to him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the *Holy Ghost fell on all them who heard the word*. And they of the circumcision who believed, were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they *heard them speak with tongues* and magnify God. 'Then answered Peter, can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost ? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."

Let the impartial reader carefully notice each particular recorded in this history, and then let him say whether he can find the shadow of evidence in favour of infant sprinkling. It is said of Cornelius himself that he was a "devout man," given to much prayer and to alms deeds ; and of his household, that "they feared God:" he deputed two of his household, and a "devout soldier," to go to Joppa, to fetch Simon ; and he assembled his religious friends and acquaintances together, to hear the word of the Lord from the mouth of the Apostles ; "We are all here," said he, "present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." Now observe

how exactly the Apostle's present conduct accords with his former practice, and with the rules prescribed in the commission; to which he appeals for his authority, as the messenger of the Lord; "And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." While this Apostle was thus preaching pardon through faith in a crucified Saviour; and while Cornelius and his friends were listening with attention to this sacred truth, the Holy Ghost descended upon them, and endued them with miraculous gifts—and those persons who *heard his word*, and who were endued with the Holy Ghost, are the persons whom Peter commanded *to be baptized* in the name of the Lord. Is there any possible mode of reasoning which can infer the Baptism of infants, from this statement? Does not every word throughout the whole, militate against the system?

We find the sixth example of apostolic Baptism, Acts xvi. 13—16. — "And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women who resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things which were spoken

of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there : and she constrained us."

Facts are stubborn things — and *it is a fact*, that there is not one word about children, from the beginning to the end of this history ! Before the Pædobaptists profess to derive support in favour of their theory from this document, they should prove that Lydia was a married woman, that she had young children, that they were with her at Philippi, and that they were baptized by the Apostle, — *till they have demonstrated* these things (and the *onus probandi* lies on them), we deny that they can derive from this example any authority for their practice of sprinkling infants.

Whitby says, in his paraphrase of this passage, that " when Lydia and *those of her household* were instructed in the Christian faith, and in the nature of Baptism required by it, she was baptized, and her household." This explication completely excludes infants, for *they* could not have received *that instruction*, which according to this Pædobaptist commentator, was imparted to *her household*, as well as to herself !

The Baptism of the jailor, and his household, is recorded in the same chapter, from the 30th to the 34th verse ; — " And *he* said, Sirs, what

must I do to be saved? And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to *all that were in his house*. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

It appears from this statement that the jailor's family consisted of persons in the full exercise of their understandings, that they believed the testimony of the Apostle, and were capable of professing faith in the doctrines which he preached. "Paul and Silas spake the word of the Lord unto him, and to *all that were in his house*; they exhorted him, and all that were with him, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and he, and *all that were in his house*, believed, were baptized, and rejoiced in God." The argument drawn from the use of the singular participle (*πεπιστευκως* *he believing*) that his household were baptized on *his* profession of faith, is rendered nugatory by the recurrence of the singular form of the verb in the subsequent relation. He and *his house* *πεπιστευκως* believing; he and *his house* *εβαπτισθη* were baptized; he and *his house* *ηγαλλιασατο* rejoiced. Neither can it be supposed that eternal salvation was secured to his house-

hold, upon *his* believing the testimony of the Apostle. Dr. Doddridge's observations on this passage are much to the purpose; "The meaning cannot be that the eternal salvation of his family would be secured by *his* faith; but that his believing in Christ would be the best security of his family from present danger; and that if they also themselves believed, they would be entitled to the same spiritual and everlasting blessings with himself." If then, the jailor's faith did not give his family a title to eternal life; if it did not secure to them the enjoyment of spiritual blessings; upon what principle could it give them a right to Baptism, which, according to the Independents, is the outward seal of those blessings?

We conclude, therefore, from the whole account, that he and his household *believed*; and that on their individual profession of faith in the Lord Jesus, he and his household were baptized.*

* There are many Dissenters who endeavour to vindicate the practice of baptizing their children upon the supposition that there were infants in the various households mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles; and that, consequently, they were baptized with the elder members of the family. This consequential mode of reasoning has been met, we think, successfully by a late writer, whose powerful talents have rendered him conspicuous in the walks of literature. Arguing on this point, he says:—"I have, I confess, no eye for these smoke-like wreaths of Inference, this ever-winding spiral *ergo* from the narrow aperture of perhaps a single text: or rather an interpretation forced into it, by construing an idiomatic phrase in an artless narrative with the same absoluteness as if it had formed part of a mathematical problem!

In Acts xviii. 8. we read of certain Corinthians who were baptized by Paul:—"And Crispus,

I start back from these inverted Pyramids, where the apex is the base! If I should inform any one that I had called at a friend's house, but had found nobody at home, the family having all gone to the play; and if he, on the strength of this information, should take occasion to asperse my friend's wife for unmotherly conduct in taking an infant, six months old, to a crowded theatre; would you allow him to press on the words, *nobody* and *all* the family, in justification of the slander? Would you not tell him, that the words were to be interpreted by the nature of the subject, the purpose of the speaker, and their ordinary acceptation? And that he must or might have known, that infants of that age would not be admitted into the theatre? Exactly so, with regard to the words, "he and all his household." Had Baptism of infants at that early period of the Gospel been a known practice, or had this been previously demonstrated,—then indeed the argument, that in all probability there was one or more infants or young children in so large a family, would be no otherwise objectionable than as being superfluous, and a sort of anticlimax in logic. But if the words are cited as *the* proof, it would be a clear *petitio principii*, though there had been nothing else against it. But when we turn back to the Scriptures preceding the narrative, and find repentance and belief demanded as the terms and indispensable conditions of Baptism—*then* the case above imagined applies in its full force. Equally vain is the pretended analogy from circumcision, which was no sacrament at all; but the means and mark of national distinction. In the first instance it was, doubtless, a privilege or mark of superior rank conferred on the descendants of Abraham. In the patriarchal times this rite was confined (the first governments being Theocracies) to the priesthood, who were set apart to that office from their birth. At a later period this token of the *premier class* was extended to kings. And thus, when it was re-ordained by Moses for the whole Jewish nation, it was at the same time said—Ye are *all* priests and kings—Ye are a consecrated people. In addition to this, or rather in aid of this, circumcision was intended to distinguish the Jews by some indelible sign: and it was no less necessary that Jewish children should be recognizable as Jews, than Jewish adults—not to mention the greater safety of the rite in infancy. Nor was it ever pretended that any grace was conferred with it, or that the rite was significant of any inward or spiritual operation. In short, an unprejudiced and competent reader need only peruse the first 33 paragraphs of the 18th section of Taylor's

the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, with all his house: and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized."

And in 1 Cor. i. 14—16. he says, "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanus; besides, I know not whether I baptized any other." And again, in the 16th chapter;—"Ye know the house of Stephanus, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints."

In these cases, as in those already adduced, we find a strict regard to the *order* laid down in the commission,—teaching preceded Baptism; and none were baptized but those who professed faith in Christ. It is said that the Corinthians "heard the word, that they believed and were

Liberty of Prophesying; and then compare with these the remainder of the section added by him after the restoration: those, namely, in which he *attempts* to overthrow his own arguments. I had almost said, *affects*: for such is the feebleness, and so palpable the sophistry, of his answers, that I find it difficult to imagine, that Taylor himself could have been satisfied with them"—[See post, 188.]—"And this I say without in the least retracting my former concession, that the texts appealed to, as commanding or authorizing Infant Baptism, are all without exception made to bear a sense neither contained nor deducible: and likewise that (historically considered) there exists no sufficient *positive* evidence, that the Baptism of Infants was instituted by the Apostles in the practice of the apostolic age." Coleridge's Aids to Reflection, p. 357—361.

baptized.” Of the household of Crispus it is said, that “he believed on the Lord *with all his οικω family*” (so Grotius, Doddridge, and others have rendered οικος in a variety of instances). And of the household of Stephanus it is said, “that they were devoted to the ministry of the saints;” being employed, either in preaching the Gospel, or in succouring the saints under trial and affliction.*

* “As for the conjecture concerning the family of Stephanus, at the best it is but a conjecture; and besides that, it is not proved that there were children in the family: yet if that were granted, it follows not that they were baptized, because by *whole families*, in Scripture, is meant all persons of reason and age within the family; for it is said, of the ruler at Capernaum, *that he believed and all his house*: now you may also suppose that in his house were little babes, that is likely enough, and you may suppose that they did believe too before they could understand, but that is not so likely; and then the argument from baptizing of Stephanus’ household, may be allowed just as probable: but this is unman-like to build upon such slight airy conjectures.

“But tradition by all means must supply the place of Scripture, and there is a pretended tradition apostolical, that infants were baptized: but at this we are not much moved; for we who rely upon the written Word of God as sufficient to establish all true religion, do not value the allegation of traditions: and however the world goes, none of the reformed churches can pretend this argument against this opinion, because they who reject tradition when it is against them, must not pretend it at all for them: but if we should allow the topic to be good, yet how will it be verified? for so far as it can yet appear, it relies wholly upon the testimony of Origen, for from him Austin had it. Now a tradition apostolical, if it be not consigned with a fuller testimony than of one person whom all after ages have condemned of many errors, will obtain so little reputation amongst those who know that things have upon greater authority pretended to derive from the Apostles, and yet falsely, that it will be a great argument that he is credulous and weak, that shall be determined by so weak probation in matters of so great concernment. And the truth of the business is, as there was no command of Scripture to oblige children to the susception of it, so the ne-

Dr. Macknight observes upon this passage, that “the family of Stephanus *seem all to have been adults, when they were baptized.*” And surely what is said of the family of Crispus affords us strong evidence of their being adults, when they were baptized; for they all believed in the Lord!

We shall only notice further the Baptism of certain disciples at Ephesus. Acts xix. 1—7.—“And it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, unto what then were ye baptized? and they said, unto John’s Baptism. Then said

cessity of Pædo-baptism was not determined in the church till in the eighth age after Christ, but in the year 418, in the Milevitan council, a provincial of Africa, there was a canon made for Pædo-baptism; never till then! I grant it was practised in Africa before that time, and they or some of them thought well of it, and though that be no argument for us to think so, yet none of them did ever before pretend it to be necessary, none to have been a precept of the gospel. St. Austin was the first that ever preached it to be absolutely necessary, and it was in his heat and anger against Pelagius, who had warmed and chafed him so in that question, that it made him innovate in other doctrines possibly of more concernment than this. And that although this was practised anciently in Africa, yet that it was without an opinion of necessity, and not often there, not at all in other places, we have the testimony of a learned Pædo-baptist, Ludovicus Vives, who in his annotations upon St. Austin, affirms, ‘anciently, no one but a grown up person was baptized.’” See Dr. Jeremy Taylor of the Liberty of Prophesying.

Paul, John verily baptized with the Baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve."

It is not our present purpose to enter into the controversy respecting these disciples, who were supposed to have been baptized a second time (about this the most learned commentators are divided); but we shall briefly remark that they possessed those qualifications, which rendered them proper subjects for the ordinance; they were adults; they were called disciples; they had been instructed under the ministry of John; and they are said to have believed.

In concluding this chapter we have only to remark, that the spiritual constitution of our Lord's kingdom; the nature of Gospel ordinances themselves; the persons to whom the Apostles administered them; and the requirement of faith, repentance, and holiness of life, on the part of those who were admitted into union with the church, sufficiently attest, that infants were not regarded, in the apostolic days, as coming within the intention of the commission. Nor, indeed, could it have been the design of Christ

and his Apostles to have instituted Infant Baptism, unless it had been likewise their intention to have made Christianity what Judaism was, a national religion; and thus to break down all distinction between men of opposite principles and practice, a consequence that ever has been, and ever will be, attendant upon that rite for which the Pædobaptists plead.

The following are some of the paragraphs referred to by Mr. S. T. Coleridge, in Dr. Jeremy Taylor's 18th section on the Liberty of Prophesying. We have given them, that the reader may see how forcibly that learned and ingenious writer argued, when he had the weight of truth on his side.

“ It is against the perpetual analogy of Christ's doctrine to baptize infants: for besides that Christ never gave any precept to baptize them, nor ever himself nor his Apostles (that appears) did baptize any of them; all that either he or his Apostles said concerning it, requires such previous dispositions to baptism of which infants are not capable, and these are faith and repentance: and not to instance in those innumerable places that require faith before this sacrament, there needs no more, but this one saying of our blessed Saviour, (Mar. 16.) *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned*; plainly thus, faith and baptism in conjunction will bring a man to heaven; but if he have not faith, baptism shall do him no good. So that if baptism be necessary, then, so is faith, and much more; for want of faith damns absolutely; it is not said so of the want of baptism. Now if this decretory sentence be to be understood of persons of age, and if children by such an answer (which indeed is reasonable enough) be excused from the necessity of faith, the want of which regularly does damn, then it is sottish to say the same incapacity of reason and faith shall not excuse from the actual susception of baptism, which is less necessary, and to which faith and many other acts are necessary predispositions

when it is reasonably and humanly received. The conclusion is, that baptism is also to be deferred till the time of faith: and whether infants have faith or no, is a question to be disputed by persons that care not how much they say, nor how little they prove.

“ 1. Personal and actual faith they have none; for they have no acts of understanding; and besides how can any man know that they have, since he never saw any sign of it, neither was he told so by any one that could tell? 2. Some say they have imputative faith: but then so let the sacrament be too, that is, if they have the parent's faith or the church's, then so let baptism be imputed also by derivation from them, that as in their mother's womb, and while they hang on their breasts, they live upon their mother's nourishment, so they may upon the baptism of their parents or their mother the church. For since faith is necessary to the susception of baptism (and they themselves confess it by striving to find out new kinds of faith to daub the matter up) such as the faith is, such must be the sacrament: for there is no proportion between an actual sacrament and an imputative faith, this being in immediate and necessary order to that: and whatsoever can be said to take off from the necessity of actual faith, all that and much more may be said to excuse from the actual susception of baptism. 3. The first of these devices was that of Luther and his scholars, the second of Calvin and his; and yet there is a third device which the church of Rome teaches, and that is, that infants have habitual faith: but who told them so? how can they prove it? what revelation or reason teaches any such thing? Are they by this habit so much as disposed to an actual belief without a new master? Can an infant sent into a Mahometan province be more confident for Christianity when he comes to be a man, than if he had not been baptized? Are there any acts precedent, concomitant or consequent to this pretended habit? This strange invention is absolutely without art, without Scripture, reason, or authority: but the men are to be excused unless there were a better; but for all these stratagems, the argument now alledged against the baptism of infants is demonstrative and unanswerable.

“ To which also this consideration may be added, that if baptism be necessary to the salvation of infants, upon whom is the imposition laid? To whom is the command given? To the parents or to the children? Not to the children, for they are not capable of a law; not to the parents, for then God hath put the salvation of innocent babes into the power of others; and infants may be damned for their fathers' carelessness or malice. It follows that it is not necessary at all to be done to them, to whom it cannot be prescribed as a law, and in whose behalf it cannot be reasonably intrusted to others with the appendant necessity; and if it be not necessary, it is certain it is not reasonable, and most certain it is no where in terms prescribed, and

therefore it is to be presumed, that it ought to be understood and administered according as other precepts are, with reference to the capacity of the subject and the reasonableness of the thing.

“ For I consider, that the baptizing of infants does rush us upon such inconveniencies, which in other questions we avoid like rocks, which will appear if we discourse thus.

“ Either baptism produces spiritual effects, or it produces them not: if it produces not any, why is such contention about it, what are we the nearer heaven if we are baptized? And if it be neglected, what are we the farther off? But if (as without all peradventure all the Pædo-baptists will say) baptism does do a work upon the soul, producing spiritual benefits and advantages, these advantages are produced by the external work of the Sacrament alone, or by that as it is helped by the co-operation and predispositions of the *suscipient*.

“ If by the external work of the sacrament alone, how does this differ from the *opus operatum* of the papists, save that it is worse? For they say the sacrament does not produce its effect, but in a *suscipient* disposed by all requisites and due preparatives of piety, faith, and repentance; though in a subject so disposed, they say, the sacrament by its own virtue does it; but this opinion says it does it of itself without the help, or so much as the coexistence of any condition but the mere reception.

“ But if the sacrament does not do its work alone, but *per modum recipientis* according to the predispositions of the *suscipient*, then, because infants can neither hinder it, nor do any thing to further it, it does them no benefit at all. And if any man runs for succour to that exploded *κηρυγμα*, that infants have faith, or any other inspired habit of I know not what or how, we desire no more advantage in the world, than that they are constrained to an answer without revelation, against reason, common sense, and all the experience in the world.

“ The sum of the argument in short, is this, though under another representment.

“ Either baptism is a mere ceremony, or it implies a *duty* on our part. If it be a ceremony only, how does it sanctify us, or *make the comers thereunto perfect*? If it implies a duty on our part, how then can children receive it, who cannot do duty at all?

“ And indeed, this way of ministration makes baptism to be wholly an outward duty, a work of the law, a carnal ordinance; it makes us adhere to the letter, without regard of the spirit, to be satisfied with shadows, to return to bondage, to relinquish the mysteriousness, the substance and spirituality of the gospel. Which argument is of so much the more consideration, because under the spiritual covenant, or the gospel of grace, if *the mystery* goes not

before the *symbol* (which it does when the symbols are seals and consignations of the grace, as it is said the sacraments are) yet it always accompanies it, but never follows in order of time: and this is clear in the perpetual analogy of holy Scripture.

“ For baptism is never propounded, mentioned or enjoined as a means of remission of sins, or of eternal life, but something of duty, choice and sanctity is joined with it, in order to production of the end so mentioned, ‘ Know ye not that as many as are baptized into Christ Jesus, are baptized into his death? (Rom. vi. 3.) There is the mystery and the symbol together, and declared to be perpetually united, ὅσοι ἐβαπτίσθημεν. All of us who were baptized into one, were baptized into the other, not only into the name of Christ, but into his death also: but the meaning of this as it is explained in the following words of St. Paul, makes much for our purpose: for to be baptized into his death, signifies ‘ To be buried with him in baptism, that as Christ rose from the dead, we also should walk in newness of life:’ (Verse 4.) That is the full mystery of baptism; for being baptized into his death, or which is all one in the next words, ‘ ἐν ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ’ ‘ Into the likeness of his death,’ (verse 5.) cannot go alone; if we be so planted into Christ, we shall be partakers of his resurrection, and that is not here instanced in precise *reward*, but in *exact duty*, for all this is nothing but ‘ crucifixion of the old man, a destroying the body of sin, that we no longer serve sin.’ (verse 6.)

“ This indeed is truly to be baptized both in the symbol and the mystery: whatsoever is less than this, is but the symbol only, a *mere ceremony*, an *opus operatum*, a dead letter, an empty shadow, an instrument without an agent to manage, or force to actuate it.

“ Plainer yet: ‘ Whosoever are baptized into Christ have put on Christ, have put on the new man:’ but to put on this new man, is ‘ To be formed in righteousness, and holiness, and truth:’ this whole argument is the very words of St. Paul. The major proposition is dogmatically determined, Gal. iii. 27. The minor in Ephes. iv. 24. The conclusion then is obvious, that they who are not formed new ‘ In righteousness, and holiness, and truth,’ they who remaining in the present incapacities cannot ‘ walk in newness of life,’ they have not been ‘ baptized into Christ,’ and then they have but one member of the distinction, used by St. Peter, they have that baptism ‘ Which is a putting away the filth of the flesh;’ but they have not that baptism ‘ Which is the answer of a good conscience towards God,’ (1 Pet. iii. 21.) which is the only ‘ baptism that saves us:’ and this is the case of children; and then the case is thus.

“ As infants by the force of nature cannot put themselves into a supernatural condition, (and therefore say the Pædobaptists, they need baptism to put them into it:) so if they be baptized before the

use of reason, before the ‘works of the Spirit,’ before the operations of grace, before they can throw off ‘The works of darkness, and live in righteousness and newness of life,’ they are never the nearer: from the pains of hell they shall be saved by the mercies of God and their own innocence, though they die *in puris naturalibus*, and baptism will carry them no further. For that *baptism that saves us*, is not the only *washing with water*, of which only children are capable, *but the answer of a good conscience towards God*, of which they are not capable till the use of reason, till they know to choose the good and refuse the evil.

“And from thence I consider anew, that all vows made by persons under others’ names, stipulations made by minors, are not valid, till they by a supervening act, after they are of sufficient age, do ratify them. Why then may not infants as well make the vow *de novo*, as *de novo* ratify that which was made for them *ab antiquo* when they come to years of choice? If the *infant* vow be invalid till the *manly* confirmation, why were it not as good they staid to make it till that time, before which, if they do make it, it is to no purpose? This would be considered.

“And in conclusion, our way is the surer way, for not to baptize children till they can give an account of their faith, is the most proportionable to an act of reason and humanity, and it can have no danger in it: for to say that infants may be damned for want of baptism, (a thing which is not in their power to acquire, they being persons not yet capable of a law) is to affirm that of God which we dare not say of any wise and good man. Certainly it is much derogatory to God’s justice and a plain defiance to the infinite reputation of his goodness.” See Dr. Jeremy Taylor on the Liberty of Prophecy, p. 342—349.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THEORY OF PÆDOBAPTISM EXAMINED AS TO ITS ORIGIN AND MORAL TENDENCY.

HAVING before stated the theory of Pædobaptism as it has been laid down by some of its most distinguished advocates; we shall now proceed to examine the period when the Baptism of Infants was first introduced, and the consequences which have necessarily attended this practice. This latter point in the controversy, though touched upon occasionally by writers on our side of the question, has never been pursued with all the advantage it fairly presents, as a position from which the whole system of Pædobaptism stands exposed to a most formidable attack: satisfied with establishing the scriptural authority of Believers' Baptism by immersion, against the bold assumptions and ingenious sophisms of their opponents, they have seldom carried their inquiries into the moral and political tendency of Pædobaptism among those nations where it has obtained a general observance. That such a rite

should have prevailed so extensively for ages, without producing some results characteristic of its natural tendency, is altogether impossible. What these results are, is too manifest to escape detection, too universal to admit of doubt, and too consequential to allow of a false ascription : we shall therefore direct the attention of our reader to them in the course of the present chapter.

The first point that comes under our consideration at this time, respects the claims which the Pædobaptists make in favour of the divine authenticity of Infant Baptism, as founded on its high antiquity. Most Protestant writers contend that it is authorized by the precepts of the New Testament and the practice of the Apostles, though they can bring no passage in support of their opinion : while the Popish writers honestly confess, that Infant Baptism is not to be found in the Scriptures, either among the commands of Christ, or the acts of the Apostles ; but that it was introduced *solely* by the authority of the church, subsequent to the apostolic age. This latter opinion we believe to be correct, and with a view to establish its truth, we shall,

I. Inquire into the origin of this practice.

When did the Baptism of babes come into practice ? Did it constantly and universally prevail in the first ages of the Christian dispensation ?

Upon the closest examination of the inspired writings, we cannot find one passage which leads us to infer, that either Christ or his Apostles practised or enjoined this ceremony. It was altogether unknown to the Christian church during the first century, according to the concessions of Pædobaptists themselves. Luther says, "it cannot be proved by the sacred Scriptures, that Infant Baptism was instituted by Christ, or begun by the first Christians after the Apostles." Cuccellæus observes, "the Baptism of Infants in the first two centuries after Christ was altogether unknown; but in the third and fourth centuries was allowed by some few: in the fifth and following ages it was generally received." Episcopius and Limborch maintain that "the necessity of Pædobaptism was never asserted in any council, till about the year 418." Nor is the testimony of Suicerus less decided: "No one received Baptism during the first two centuries, except he who was instructed in the faith, initiated into the doctrines of Christ, and able to testify that he *believed*, because it is written '*he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*;' therefore it was necessary in the first place *to believe* — hence arose the order of catechumens in the church. At that time also, the custom was universally and constantly observed, to give the eucharist to catechumens immediately after their Baptism."

Such is the testimony of men who were Pædo-

baptists; men of profound learning, extensive research, and well acquainted with the records of early ecclesiastical customs. Such testimony is of itself sufficient to repel the charge of ignorance, bigotry, and intolerance, which some Pædobaptist ministers, with an air of haughty confidence, cast upon us, because we dare to affirm that Infant Baptism is not to be found among the institutes of Christ.

Since the Pædobaptists are anxious to prove the early practice of this rite, with a view to establish its divine authority, we shall examine the nature and force of the evidence which they adduce in favour of its primitive antiquity.

The only fathers of the first century whose writings are extant, are Barnabas, Clemens Romanus, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp: these were contemporaries with the Apostles; yet, it is manifest from Dr. Wall's history, that nothing can be gathered from them in support of this practice.

Justin Martyr, who lived in the second century, is the first author quoted in defence of this theory. From him, and he wrote about the year 150, the following passage is selected by Dr. Wall, and I have copied his translation. "I will now declare to you after what manner we, being made new by Christ, have dedicated ourselves to God; lest if I should leave out that, I might seem to deal unfairly in some part of my

apology. They who are persuaded and do believe that these things which are taught by us are true, and do promise to live accordingly to them, are directed first to pray, and ask of God with fasting, the forgiveness of their former sins; and we also pray and fast together with them: then we bring them to some place where there is water; and they are regenerated by the same way of regeneration by which we were regenerated, for they are washed with water in the name of God the Father, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost." Dr. Wall, after quoting this passage, adds these remarkable words: "If I am asked to what purpose I bring in this, in a discourse of Infant Baptism, my answer is, that I do not produce it as making directly, or immediately, either for or against it: but I bring it in because it is the most ancient account of the way of Baptism, next the Scriptures, and shews the plain and simple manner of administering it." An impartial reader will draw a different inference; he will perceive that this passage not only makes against Infant Baptism, but that it furnishes us with a powerful argument in favour of our practice. Justin is speaking of those who had attained to the full exercise of their understanding; he describes them as converted, or made new by Christ; he says that *they dedicated themselves* to God, not that they were dedicated by

parents or sponsors ; he represents them as being persuaded of the truth of what they heard, as believing that truth, as praying, fasting, and promising to live according to the Gospel, and he adds, we take them to a place where there is water, and baptize them in the name of the sacred Three.

Now we ask, does this account favour the theory of Infant Baptism ? Does it not, on the contrary, most decidedly support the practice of the Baptism of believers by immersion ? Infants can neither fast, nor pray, nor promise obedience : nor, if they are to be sprinkled, need they be taken to a place where there is water ; a little water may easily be brought to them, as is the custom at the present day. As Justin in his apology intended to give the Roman authorities an impartial account of the sentiments, worship and practices of the Christians, would he not have mentioned the Baptism of infants, if, at the time in which he wrote, such a rite existed ?

There is another passage of the same writer, which Dr. Wall has thus translated : “ Several persons among us of sixty or seventy years old, of both sexes, who were discipled to Christ in their childhood, do continue uncorrupted.” From which it is inferred that the discipling of these persons in childhood, means, that they were baptized in their infancy. Justin’s words are,

οἱ ἐκ παιδων ἐμαθητευθησαν τῷ χριστῷ who *from* their childhood have been disciplined to Christ, or instructed in his doctrines. The verb μαθητευω as used in the New Testament, and in the writings of the Greek fathers, is declared by the first critics, to include the act of teaching, to make disciples by instruction. Thus Schleusner renders it, “To instruct any one in the first principles of the Christian religion.” And the word is so used, Matt. xiii. 52; “every scribe μαθητευθεις instructed in the kingdom of heaven.” The constant practice of teaching catechumens, who passed through various classes, and underwent many examinations, before they were received to Baptism, manifestly shews that the early Christians were exceedingly solicitous that persons should be instructed in the faith, before they were admitted to the ordinances of the Gospel.

Irenæus, who wrote towards the close of the second century, about thirty years after Justin, does not mention the Baptism of infants: nor do the quotations cited by Dr. Wall from his writings, prove that it was practised in his time. In his work against heresies, written after his election to the bishopric of Lyons in 178, under the pontificate of Eleutherus, he says, “For Christ came to save all persons by himself; all, I mean, who by him are born again to God, infants and little ones, and children and youths, and aged persons.” Now admitting the genu-

iness of this passage, which has been disputed both by Papists and Protestants, it proves nothing in favour of Infant Baptism: nor can an inference in support of this practice be drawn from it, without allowing, what we presume the Independents do not believe, that Baptism and regeneration are the same thing.

Had Dr. Wall proceeded in his quotation from Irenæus, he would have destroyed the impression which the above passage was calculated to make upon the minds of his readers in favour of his theory; since what Irenæus says afterwards, proves that he did not refer to the Baptism of infants. His words are, “ For this end he (Christ) passed through every age (of man) and was made an infant for the sake of infants, sanctifying infants; he was made a little one, for the sake of little ones, sanctifying that age; and was at the same time an example to them of the effect of piety, justice, and subjection. He was a youth for the sake of youths, being an example to youths, and sanctifying them to the Lord. And so also he became a senior for the sake of seniors, that he might be a perfect master to all ages, not only by an exposition of the truth, but with regard to their age, sanctifying likewise the aged, and being to them also a pattern: and even until he died, that he might be the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have

the pre-eminence, the prince of life, the first of all, and preceding all." *

The meaning of this passage appears to be, that Christ came to save all who through grace were born unto God, whether they were young or old; and that by passing through the several stages of human life, he became an example to them all. This testimony, which Dr. Wall and the Independents have thought so conclusive a proof of the existence of Infant Baptism in the time of Irenæus, Venema has declared to be doubtful and insufficient to prove the fact. In his ecclesiastical history, he says, "Concerning the custom of the church before the time of Tertullian, nothing can be affirmed with certainty, since no where among the preceding writers, as far as my knowledge extends, does an indubitable statement of Pædobaptism appear." Justin Martyr, in his Apology, speaking of Baptism, mentions that of adults only. Irenæus alone, in his book against heresies, has been supposed to have pointed to it as with a finger, where he says, "That Christ passed through all ages of man, that he might save all by himself, all, I say, who by him are born unto God; infants, little ones, children, youths, and the aged." The word (*renasci*) to be regenerated, was wont to be used respecting Baptism, and that it may be taken in that sense here, I willingly admit; nevertheless,

* Vide Iren. adv. Hær. lib. 2. cap. 39. p. 161. Oxon. 1702.

I do not think it certain, since it is not always used in this sense, particularly when no mention of Baptism either precedes or follows it, as is the case here : and in this place, to be regenerated by Christ, may mean to be sanctified or saved by Christ. The sense therefore may be, that in passing through all the various ages of man, Christ designed by his example to shew, that he came for the purpose of saving men of every age, and to sanctify, or save even infants. I conclude, therefore, that before the time of Tertullian, Pædobaptism cannot with certainty be demonstrated to have been practised ; but that in his time there were some who desired to have their infants baptized, especially since through fear of death, they dreaded lest they should die unbaptized ; an opinion which Tertullian opposed, but in a manner which shewed that Infant Baptism then began to prevail. These circumstances respecting the antiquity of Pædobaptism, after the times of the Apostles, we may assert with certainty : but we cannot go farther if we would build on a solid foundation.” *

Tertullian is the next author mentioned. He was a native of Africa, a presbyter of the Carthaginian church, and flourished at the commencement of the third century. He is the first

* Vid. Venemæ Hist. Eccles. Christ. Secul. 2. p. 477. Lug. Bat 1779.

writer who mentions the Baptism of babes ; and the vague and undecided manner in which he speaks of it, proves that in his day the practice was novel, by no means popular, and far from being general. Dr. Wall, who has made the most of his authority, confesses that “ he knows not how to reconcile his statements, and therefore leaves them to his readers to pick out what coherent sense they can.” That our readers may judge for themselves, we give Tertullian’s words : “ What necessity is there to expose godfathers to the hazard of answering for those whom they hold at the font ; since they may be prevented by death from being able to perform those promises which they have made for the children, or else may be disappointed by their evil inclinations ? Jesus Christ says indeed, hinder not little children from coming to me, but that they should come to him as soon as they are advanced in years, as soon as they have learnt their religion, when they may be taught whither they are going, when they become Christians, when they begin to be able to know Jesus Christ. What is there that shall compel this innocent age to receive Baptism ? And since they are not yet allowed the disposal of temporal goods, is it reasonable that they should be entrusted with the concerns of heaven ? Let them know how to desire this salvation, that you may appear to have given to him that asketh.”

This passage shews that the Baptism of babes was beginning to be used in Tertullian's day, but we plainly see that he did not advocate the practice, that he condemned it as absurd and pernicious, that he could not trace its authority to apostolic appointment, and that it was not openly recognised as a tradition of the Christian church.

What this father says in another place, clearly proves that he considered infants unfit for Baptism; and that administering it to them, was in his opinion, a departure from the original, as well as the general custom of the church. "Baptism is the seal of faith; which faith is begun and evidenced by the faith of repentance; we are not therefore washed that we may cease to sin, but because we have ceased to do it, and are already purified in the heart." *

Here he plainly declares, that those who then were members of the church, were not baptized till they professed to be the subjects of faith, repentance, and inward holiness. Should it be replied that Tertullian was a convert from heathenism, and therefore was not baptized till he had given evidence of faith and repentance; we answer, if it were so, would he have spoken in this manner of his brethren, if they had been baptized in their infancy? And in that case is it likely that he would have opposed Infant Bap-

* Vide de Pœnitentia, Cap. 6. p. 125.

tism at all? The way in which he speaks of this ceremony, shews that in his esteem, it was an innovation; of this our opponents seem conscious, when they endeavour to lessen his authority, by impugning his character. We are as little disposed as they can be, to adopt the opinions of any of the early fathers on points of doctrine; for we believe that in many instances they have darkened counsel by words without knowledge: but as narrators of historical facts, their testimony is of importance. From them, and from Tertullian in particular, we discover, that at the close of the second century, when the practice of Infant Baptism began to appear, the church of Christ had lost much of its primitive simplicity, and congregational independence; that the seeds of episcopacy long secretly sown were ripening into popery, which in succeeding ages, has, like the deadly upas, been spreading its deleterious shade over the vineyard of the Lord.

We now come to Origen, another African presbyter, who lived about the year 230. His testimony in favour of Pædobaptism has been deemed explicit, and we should allow the assumption, could it be proved that the works from which it is taken were his genuine productions: but on this point there are many strong and reasonable doubts. The evidence which the Independents, upon the authority of Dr. Wall, have

urged as decisive, is collected from the Latin translations of Ruffinus and Hierom, which are so interpolated, that most learned men have disputed their authenticity. Dupin says, “ We have hardly any of the homilies (of Origen) in Greek, and those which we have in Latin are translated by Ruffinus and others, with so much liberty, that it is a difficult matter to discern what is Origen’s own from what has been foisted in by the interpreter.” In his notes he observes, “ And besides, this appears by the translation itself, which is full of figures, and allusions to Latin words and terms, taken in another sense than what they were in Origen’s time, where the Trinity, and other mysteries, are expressed in such terms as were not used till after the council of Nice; and where there are points of discipline more modern than Origen’s age; which has given occasion to those who have not considered the liberty that Ruffinus took of adding or leaving out what he pleased, to doubt whether the greatest part of these works were Origen’s or no. The liberty which Ruffinus has given himself is still more evident by what he has written in the prologue to his version of the commentary upon the epistle to the Romans, which he says he has abridged by above the half. Hierom’s versions are not more exact.” * Erasmus, Grotius, Huetius, and others, who were well acquainted with

* See Eccles. Hist. vol. 1. p. 100.

the writings of Origen, have condemned these Latin versions as full of interpolations ; and even Dr. Wall himself, who has shewn more candour than any of the later defenders of Pædobaptism, confesses that “ all the world have blamed the method of Ruffinus, for it is fit for a translator to give a true account of what his author says, be it good or bad ; whereas now in these translations of Ruffinus, the reader is uncertain whether he read Origen or Ruffinus.” Does not this concession invalidate the whole mass of evidence which the Dr. has selected from these corrupt translations ? And since nothing can be collected from the genuine Greek works of Origen, in favour of Infant Baptism, are we not justified in concluding, that those passages attributed to him, are the interpolations of Ruffinus, a Popish monk, who lived at the close of the fourth century, and who wished to make it appear upon the testimony of Origen, that Infant Baptism was a custom of the church grounded upon apostolic authority ? That neither Cyprian nor Augustine, both strenuous advocates for Infant Baptism, refer to this supposed testimony of Origen, is another reason why we reject it as spurious.

We shall now notice the testimony of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage. This African father, who lived in the middle of the third century, was the earliest writer who expressly pleaded for

the Baptism of infants, and consistently with this sentiment, he admitted them to the Lord's supper. If then his opinion be of any weight in the one case, it ought to be of equal weight in the other; and those who refer to his authority for the Baptism of their babes, should recollect that the custom of administering to infant's the Lord's supper, originated in the same age, and was practised and defended by the same parties.

From the days of Tertullian it is evident that Pædobaptism gained ground in Africa, where, according to general opinion, most of the early innovations took their rise; and the circumstance, that the African writers of the third century, are the first who mention the Baptism of infants, is in strict conformity with this sentiment.

The universal practice of this rite among the African churches originated in the celebrated council assembled at Carthage, by Cyprian, A. D. 253, when he, at the head of 66 bishops, enacted a law for its regular observance. This transaction has a very suspicious aspect; especially as it stands in immediate relation to the first historical documents on the subject of Infant Baptism—if it were indeed a divinely instituted ordinance, uninterruptedly transmitted from the Apostles, what need for the enactments of a council to regulate its administration?

The attempt of a late writer, to cast a veil over the broad episcopal features of this Carthaginian synod, by designating it “*a council consisting of sixty-six ministers,*” * is futile in the extreme, and betrays either a want of candour or of information. It was to all intents and purposes, an *assembly of ecclesiastical legislators*, convened by Cyprian, the great apostle of the high church party in his day, to *pass an act of uniformity*. To represent the persons who composed this council, as *ministers*, a term denoting among dissenters a perfect equality in office, is to insinuate what is not true respecting them; for they were neither in the nature, nor in the exercise of their office, equal and independent. Dr. Campbell very justly remarks, “Was it ever observed of writers in the fourth and fifth centuries, to come no lower, than that they in this manner confounded the different ecclesiastical offices of the third? Is Cyprian, for instance, in any succeeding age, styled a presbyter of Carthage, or Rogation the bishop? Are not their respective titles as uniformly observed in after-ages, as in their own?” † The same learned writer observes in another place, “Thus we have advanced from the perfect equality, in respect of ministerial powers, in the stated pastors of the churches planted by the

* See the Rev. Henry Foster Burder’s sermon on the right of infants to Baptism.

† Lect. on Eccles. Hist. vol. 1. p. 192.

Apostles, to that parochial episcopacy, which immediately succeeded it; and which, though it arose gradually from an inconsiderable cause, seems to have assumed the model of a proper episcopate, as the word is now understood, before the middle of the second century. And this I consider as the first step of the hierarchy.”*

The ecclesiastical records of the third century, the time when Infant Baptism was first mentioned, serve to prove, that the great apostacy predicted by the Apostle in his Epistle to the Thesalonians, was even at this early period assuming a decided and portentous aspect. That system of spiritual despotism, which has been denominated the hierarchy, and which for so many ages, has imposed upon the consciences of the people the most erroneous doctrines, and the most degrading ceremonies, arose from small and apparently trivial innovations upon the primitive constitution of the church of Christ. Among the first Christian societies a perfect equality and distinct independency prevailed: they chose their own officers, and directed their own affairs, according to the rules prescribed in the New Testament. This state of things appears to have been but of short continuance; for soon after the death of the Apostles, the churches which they had planted, and entrusted with their writings, were considered as possessing superior authority;

* Lect. on Eccles. Hist. vol. i. p. 242.

they were consulted on matters of importance, and were frequently constituted arbitrators on subjects of religious controversy. This appeal to the opinion of the apostolic churches, though at first voluntary, formed a precedent on which those churches afterwards claimed an exclusive right to discuss and to decide all questions of difficulty.

As one innovation prepares the way for another, so this pre-eminence of certain churches was followed by an assumption of power on the part of their ministers; who, looking upon themselves as the legitimate successors of the Apostles, exercised an authority, as hostile to the interests of true religion, as it was to the liberties of the people. Hence the origin of those various ecclesiastical orders, diocesans, metropolitans, pontiffs, &c. introduced with a train of pompous ceremonies, foreign from the nature and design of the Gospel. The numerous councils held in the third century, materially tended to exalt these ecclesiastical dignities, and to stamp them with the broad seal of public approbation. These assemblies were composed of bishops and presbyters, who, though the representatives of distinct communities, yet by their voice in council, passed decrees, which gradually abridged the liberty of the people, and at length brought them under the bondage of an episcopal usurpation.

It is acknowledged by all parties that many

innovations had crept into the Christian worship previous to this period. Mosheim, when speaking of the internal history of the church during the *second century*, says, “these councils, of which we find not the smallest trace before the middle of this century, changed the whole face of the church, and gave it a new form; for by them the ancient privileges of the people were considerably diminished, and the power and authority of the bishops greatly augmented. The humility indeed and prudence of these pious prelates prevented their assuming all at once the power with which they were afterwards invested. At their first appearance in these general councils, they acknowledged that they were no more than the delegates of their respective churches, and that they acted in the name and by the appointment of their people. But they soon changed this humble tone, imperceptibly extended the limits of their authority, turned their influence into dominion, and their councils into laws, and openly asserted at length that Christ had empowered them to prescribe to his people authoritative rules of faith and manners. Another effect of these councils was, the gradual abolition of that perfect equality which reigned among all bishops in primitive times. For the order and decency of these assemblies required that some one of the provincial bishops, met in council, should be invested with a superior degree of power and

authority, and hence the rights of Metropolitans derive their origin." Pursuing the same subject in another place, he observes, "the Christian doctors had the good fortune to persuade the people that the ministers of the Christian church succeeded to the character, rights, and privileges of the Jewish priesthood; and this persuasion was a new source both of honour and profit to the sacred order. And accordingly the bishops considered themselves as invested with a rank and character similar to those of the high priests among the Jews, while the presbyters represented the priests, and the deacons the levites. It is indeed highly probable that they who first introduced this absurd comparison of offices, so entirely distinct, did it rather through ignorance and error, than through artifice or design. The notion, however, once introduced, produced its natural effects, and those effects were pernicious. The errors to which it gave rise were many, and one of its immediate consequences was, the establishment of a greater difference between the Christian pastors and their flocks, than the genius of the Gospel seems to admit."*

This early assumption of the character and rights of the Jewish priesthood, by the minister of the Christian church, is clearly asserted by Dr. Campbell, who says, "It was the same spirit (referring to the spirit of innovation) that prompt-

* Eccles. Hist. vol. i. p. 178.

ed in the pastors, the affectation of epithets added to their names, expressive of their virtues, and of the esteem and veneration of those that approached them ; such as most holy, most blessed, most religious, most worthy of God, beloved of God, reverend, venerable, and many others, which it were tedious to enumerate — together with certain ceremonies, such as bowing the head, kissing the hand, and the like. At no time could the pharasaical scribes be accused of greater ostentation, or more desire of greetings in the markets, and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi, than were, a few ages afterwards, the ministers of the humble Jesus, who had so expressly warned his followers against the imitation of their vain-glorious manner.” *See Sect. 10.*

All the authentic ecclesiastical remains of the first ages support the testimony of these writers ; and prove, not only the reality, but the early rise, and vast extent of this episcopal usurpation. The influence of that spirit of innovation, which led the ministers of Christ to assume the dignities of the levitical priesthood, gradually spread through the whole church, till the nature and design of the Gospel were concealed ; and numerous ceremonies were introduced, which increased the power of the bishops, and gave to the Christian religion the pompous splendour of the Jewish worship. Lest these things should be opposed as unauthorized by the New Testament, they were

defended under the imposing title of *Apostolic traditions*—that is, unwritten authoritative rules of faith and practice, delivered by the Apostles to the first ministers, and handed down by them to their immediate successors. There was a two-fold purpose answered by this title;—while it emboldened the advocates of the hierarchy to prescribe what rites they pleased, it insured the adoption of those rites by the church, because they were delivered to them under the pretended sanction of apostolic authority.

We have thus briefly stated and examined the several testimonies, on which the Pædobaptists have endeavoured to establish the apostolic authority of Infant Baptism. After the strictest regard to the statements, which both the ancient and the modern defenders of this rite have advanced in its support, we still feel a firm conviction, that it came in with those numerous ceremonies which inundated the church during the second and third centuries; and that it has been perpetuated through succeeding ages, as a measure calculated to secure to the priesthood of the hierarchy, a political, as well as an ecclesiastical supremacy over the nations.

In collecting the several facts which refer to the question in dispute, our attention has been directed to the primitive fathers, a class of writers, to whose decision the Romish and Protestant clergy have constantly appealed, in support of

the various rites and ceremonies of their respective churches. In many cases, it is evident that both parties have attached a far greater importance to the writings of these men, than would be conceded to them by the Dissenters, and that they have been too eager to receive their testimony on a disputed point, as a demonstration of its apostolic antiquity and Gospel purity. We have in the course of our researches, witnessed a prevailing disposition on the part of the high ecclesiastical powers to magnify the authority of the Fathers at the expence of the Apostles ; and to rest their defence of certain customs on the usage of antiquity, rather than on the precepts and examples of the sacred writings.

The authority of an ancient writer, who affirms the existence of a questionable rite, depends more upon his integrity as a narrator of facts, than it does upon the opportunity he enjoyed of obtaining information respecting the point in dispute. Nor are we to conclude, that the bare recital of such a rite, as practised in his day, is any proof whatever that it derived its observance from the sanction of Christ and his Apostles. Were we to admit this to be the case, we must allow, as a necessary consequence, that all those superstitious ceremonies which at present characterize the Papal worship, were of divine origin, since they are mentioned by the same Fathers in connexion with Infant Baptism, and are enforced with equal zeal, and by arguments not less invincible.

Before we allow the Fathers to arbitrate this question for us, we must be firmly assured of their competency; we must feel fully satisfied, that they were men of the strictest veracity; of sound and discriminating judgments; that they were faithful expositors of the precepts and doctrines of the Apostles; and that their minds had not been led aside from the purity of the Gospel, by that spirit of innoyation and will-worship which so soon began to operate after the death of the Apostles.

With respect to the apostolic Fathers, it is generally allowed, that they were men of great piety, integrity, and simplicity of character: men who preached much, and wrote but little. Their writings, however, contribute no support to the cause of Pædobaptism. The universal silence observed by them in reference to this rite, strongly indicates that it had no existence in their days; while the direct testimony they bear on other points confirms the principles which we espouse as Baptists, and justifies our opposition to Infant Baptism as a subsequent innovation. It is a remarkable fact in the history of this controversy, that from the time of John the Baptist down to the death of Polycarp, comprehending a period of nearly 140 years, there is no mention of a single infant being baptized, nor is any man's name adverted to as having received Baptism in his infancy.

Of the immediate successors of these apostolic men, we cannot speak in terms of such unqualified approbation: for even in Justin Martyr, and Irenæus, useful as their writings are on some points, there are so many instances in which the doctrines of the Gospel are perverted from their original and obvious meaning, by a false and spurious reasoning; such forced and unnatural interpretations of Scripture, mixed up with odd similes, fables, and apocryphal tales, which betray a weakness of judgment combined with a strength of credulity, that is truly surprising in men who lived so near to the first sources of evangelical truth. The state of things at this early period, sufficiently shews, that the faith and practice of the church were gradually diverging from the line of scriptural simplicity; and, that a secret, but active ecclesiastical policy on the one hand, and a spirit of accommodation, too easily conceding to innovations, on the other, were breaking down by degrees the force of those precepts, which were intended to preserve the purity of the Christian worship from the contaminating influence of worldly pride and domination. The truth of this is attested by Hegesippus, who surviving Polycarp about fifteen years, lived to see the changes which were beginning to take place after the death of the last of the apostolic Fathers. He remarks: — “That up to the time of which we are now speaking, the

church retained the character of a chaste and unspotted virgin; for as yet, those who endeavoured to corrupt the right rule of evangelical instruction, concealed themselves in the secrecy of retirement. But after that the holy assembly of the Apostles had become entirely extinct by death; and that generation of men had, as at this day, passed away, who had enjoyed the pleasure of listening to their wise and heavenly instructions; then there sprung up a combination of the most impious heresies, frauds, and evil practices of false teachers.

As we advance, the mass of testimony respecting the doctrines, rites, and ceremonies of the church, grows upon our views; but it sadly diminishes in value, as it increases in bulk, and affords but too plain and painful an indication of a general apostacy from the purity of the Gospel truth, and the simplicity of the Christian worship. These remarks particularly apply to the writings of Tertullian, Origen, and Cyprian, the Fathers of the African churches; those early seminaries of priestly superstitions, and fruitful hot beds of ecclesiastical corruptions.

It is impossible to look into any department of the history of this period, without perceiving that a considerable change for the worse had taken place in the whole ecclesiastical system. That order of things which the Apostles left behind them, had been completely innovated; and the

various novelties introduced into the exercises of religion, by leading men farther from the truths of the Gospel, led them deeper and deeper into the error of a theology that was the creature of human invention. A considerable alteration in the constitution of the church had been introduced, which, by giving rise to different orders of clergy, laid the foundation of an extensive spiritual aristocracy, invested with claims, powers, and prerogatives little inferior to those of earthly potentates. This was accompanied with the introduction of new doctrines, which necessarily led to a still greater change in the discipline and worship of the Christian church. In fact every thing, about this time, was fast hastening to that crisis which was to mark the æra of the grand apostacy from the primitive faith and worship of God.

Such an infringement on the jurisdiction of Christ could not be supposed to have taken place, without producing the most painful moral results on the characters of those who professed Christianity. A corruption of the faith has ever been accompanied with a corruption of practice; and the church has invariably become impure in its practice, in the proportion that it has deviated from the simplicity of the precepts and doctrines of the Gospel.

The description which Cyprian gives of the state of the church in his day, shews how much

it had suffered in the purity of its character, by the multiplicity of its forms and ceremonies. Speaking of the clergy, he says; “ They studied nothing else but how they might individually increase their patrimony; forgetting what the faithful had done during, or just after the times of the Apostles, and indeed what they ought ever to do, they were wholly engrossed with an insatiable desire of enlarging their fortunes. There was no pure religion in the priests, no sincere faith in the ministers, no mercy in their works, and no discipline in their manners. The men destroyed the comeliness of their beards, and the women painted their faces. Their eyes, formed by the hand of God, were tinged, and their hair stained with false colours. The hearts of the simple were deceived by crafty frauds, and the brethren were circumvented by cunning wiles. That it was common to contract matrimonial alliances with unbelievers, and to prostitute the members of Christ to the Gentiles; and not only to swear rashly, but even falsely; to condemn their rulers with an insolent pride, to speak evil against them with a rancorous tongue, and to quarrel among themselves with an unyielding hatred. Many of the bishops, who ought to have been a lesson and an example to the rest, condemned the divine stewardship, and became the stewards of secular things; forsaking their own pulpits, deserting the people, and rambling

through the provinces of others for the purpose of seeking out stations of traffic and gain. Instead of succouring their hungry brethren in the church, they were eager only to heap up money, to seize the lands of others by treachery and fraud, and to increase their revenue by oppressive usury.”*

Such is the dark picture which this celebrated Father gave of the state of religion, only about 150 years after the death of the Apostles. And yet it is to this period, “as the first and purest age of the Christian church,” that the Pædobaptists refer us for their evidence in support of the divine authenticity of Infant Baptism. But may we not justly apprehend, that those bishops, who did not scruple at any means of enriching themselves, had multiplied the rites and ceremonies of the church in order to increase the amount of their revenues; and that Pædobaptism itself was one of the many innovations introduced for this very purpose; especially since Dupin informs us that certain fees were exacted of all who were baptized; and that a law was passed in the council of Elvira, A.D. 305, “prohibiting the baptized from putting any more money into the boxes or basins after their Baptism, as was commonly done, lest it should be thought that the priests gave for money, that which they had freely received?”†

* Vide Opera Cypriani, De Lapsis, page 123. Edit. Oxoni.

† See the Council of Elvira, 48 can. — “The priests gave for money, that which they had freely received.”—The practice of

Much as we may respect the piety of some of the Fathers, and feel obliged to them for having furnished us with a history of the early opinions and customs of the church; yet we cannot help thinking, that they have done more to promote the growth of Popery, than they have to serve the cause of Christianity; and that the frequent and confidential appeals which certain Protestant writers have made to their authority in the present dispute, prove, that Pædobaptism can only be established by arguments drawn from prin-

receiving money for baptizing, would naturally induce the priests of that age to enforce the necessity of Baptism, that by the general application of this ordinance they might establish a regular source of emolument. The relation of the above fact excites in our minds a strong suspicion that Infant Baptism was introduced into the church through the pride and cupidity of some of its spiritual rulers. Why the ceremony of sprinkling an infant should be made a matter of pecuniary profit to the ministers of religion, more than the administration of the Lord's supper, we cannot tell. Yet it is a circumstance well known to all, and severely felt by some, that the Romish and Episcopalian clergy as regularly demand their fees for performing this rite, as they do for burying the dead. There would be something exceedingly abhorrent in the idea of a minister's selling the sacramentary elements of our Lord's flesh and blood; and yet baptismal water, the supposed seal of God's covenant of grace and salvation, is, when applied to infants, a regular article of traffic between the priests and the applicants. And so much so, indeed, that many of the former would consider themselves justified in enforcing their claim, or withholding the benefit, if such it may be called. Does not such a practice savour of the corruptions of that church "which has defiled her sanctuaries with the multitude of her iniquities, and with the iniquity of her traffic?" What shall we say of such a system of things? Why, that "the ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed."

ciples which, if persisted in, must finally make men Papists. This we know was the effect produced on the mind of the great and excellent Chillingworth, who, for a time, was led to embrace the Romish communion, from the weight of authority which the Protestants themselves attached to the testimony of the primitive Fathers, and the customs of ecclesiastical antiquity. What were the views of this great man respecting the value of such guides in matters of faith and practice, is best learnt from his own words: "The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants. Whatsoever else they believe besides it, and the plain, irrefragable, indubitable consequences of it, well may they hold it, as a matter of opinions, but as matter of faith and religion, neither can they, with coherence to their own grounds, believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others, without most high and most schismatical presumption. I, for my part, after a long and (as I verily believe and hope) impartial search of the true way to eternal happiness, do profess plainly, that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot, but on this rock only. I see plainly, and with my own eyes, that there are popes against popes; councils against councils; some fathers against others; the same fathers against themselves; a consent of fathers of one age, against a consent of fathers of another age; the church of one age against the church of

another age : traditive interpretations of Scripture are pretended, but there are none to be found. No tradition but only of Scripture can derive itself from the fountain, but may be plainly proved, either to have been brought in, in such an age after Christ, or that in such an age it was not in. In a word, there is no sufficient certainty, but of Scripture only, for any considerate man to build upon," &c.

Such were the views of the great Chillingworth respecting the sufficiency of the Scriptures to guide us in all things pertaining to faith and salvation ; and it was upon this grand and immovable principle that he reared the most solid and stately defence of the Protestant cause that has appeared either in this, or in any other country, since the dawn of the glorious Reformation. Though this principle is confessedly the chief bulwark of the reformed churches against the encroachments of a papal domination, yet strange to say, the Protestants themselves are gradually weakening its strength, by appealing to the authority of Councils and Fathers in support of doctrines, rites, and ceremonies, respecting which the Scriptures are entirely silent, and thus placing an uncertain, though ancient tradition, upon an equality with divine apostolic precepts.

II. The next point in the theory of Pædobaptism that deserves to be examined, is its moral tendency, or the influence it necessarily has in pro-

ducing that laxity of religious feeling and practice which so generally prevails in Christian countries.

It will be allowed, I presume, that a misapplication of the ordinances of the Gospel is as likely to be productive of evil, as a misinterpretation of its doctrines; and that we can neither invert the order of the one, nor pervert the meaning of the other, without producing a state of things in the moral world the very opposite of that which is intended to be accomplished by a wise and just appropriation of both. To affirm the contrary of this, is, in our opinion, to maintain that truth and error, or right and wrong, are one and the same thing; and that both will, in the course of their operations, be productive of the same results. The persistency with which some nobly contend for the doctrines of the Gospel, and the promptitude with which they oppose any attempt to wrest them from their true and catholic meaning, shew, that in their estimation, the preservation of the faith once delivered to the saints, is essential to the preservation of the church of Christ amidst the numerous corruptions of a general apostacy. And ought we not to expect on their part, a similar concern for the purity of the ordinances of Christ, that they be not abused by being applied to objects other than those for which they were divinely instituted; especially, believing as we do, that Christianity has suffered as much from this cause as it has by the corruption of many of its doctrines;

and for this reason, that men are more apt to detect and ready to expose a fallacious interpretation of a fundamental truth, than they are to trace the bearings of a misapplied ordinance in all its consequences on the moral state of society. This is the point to which we wish to direct the attention of the reader, in as much as we fear, that, that destitution of religious principle in connexion with a formal profession of Christianity on the one hand, and that profligacy of manners combined with a spirit of the most determined infidelity on the other, which are the awful signs of the times in which we live, may be attributed in no inconsiderable degree to the substitution of Infant Baptism as a universal rite, in the room of that special ordinance which Christ instituted as a public expression of our faith in him. That our fears on this point are not altogether groundless, must be manifest to those who will be at the trouble to consider the nature of the rite itself, the arguments adduced in its support, the opposition of sentiment which prevails among its advocates, and the influence it has upon the minds of those who have been taught to regard it as a mean of grace and salvation.

In the first place, this theory tends to lessen the importance of the Christian revelation. *To us* it appears evident that the ordinances of Christ's church are founded upon his authority and are illustrated by precedents drawn from the New

Testament ; this the Pædobaptists virtually deny, by appealing to an abrogated rite of the Old Testament dispensation in defence of their practice : but why draw an argument from this source, if the validity of infant sprinkling can be proved from the Christian revelation ? Is it not fair to infer that a rite which cannot be established on this ground, is not an ordinance of the Gospel dispensation ? We estimate as highly, and believe as firmly, as any of our opponents, the truths of the Old Testament Scriptures ; but we deny their sufficiency to direct us in the administration of Gospel ordinances. Christ is the sole legislator of his church, and he has given his word, “ whereunto we do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.”

The church of Rome borrows her mitred priests, and smoking incense, from the splendid ceremonies of the Mosaic economy : the church of England, her vestments, her altar, and her tythes, from the same source : and Pædobaptist Dissenters profess to derive their reasons for sprinkling infants from a rite of the same abrogated system : but neither of them recognize the principle, to its full extent, that the New Testament Scriptures contain within themselves every thing that is essential to our faith and practice.

Surely to maintain that Pædobaptism is a

divine rite of the *New Covenant*, and yet to appeal to *the writings of Moses* for its authority, is to question the sufficiency and importance of the Christian Revelation: and implies that it is not competent to direct us in the administration of its own institutions. We consider the law of Baptism to be as independent of the law of circumcision, as the Lord's supper is of the pass-over; and in both cases, it appears to us, that Christ has given perfect instruction to his followers: and, therefore, it is not only unnecessary, but presumptuous, to go to any other quarter. Such appeals from Christ to Moses have tended materially to adulterate the truth, to corrupt the practice of the church, and to rob Christ of his glory, as Legislator in Zion.

Again, the *arguments* adduced in support of this theory are not discoverable by the illiterate.

It is an inherent excellence of the Christian revelation, that its precepts are expressed in terms and illustrated by examples, familiar to the ignorant as well as the learned: a man of plain understanding, and very limited information, has only to open these sacred records, and attend to the obvious meaning of the words in which their injunctions are delivered, and he will obtain a perfect knowledge of the institutions of Christ, without the aid of commentators or critics. It is a fact in which we glory, and which our opponents, with all their sophistry, cannot refute, that

the directions for the observance of Believers' Baptism, and the arguments for its support, are to be found in the New Testament.

If infant sprinkling were of Christ, would it not admit of proof *as readily* as Believers' Baptism? Should we not find it supported by some tangible scriptural evidence, that would carry conviction to the mind of the illiterate? But in vain does a reader of this description come to the New Testament to establish the right of his infants to Baptism; in vain does he seek from thence, authority for the administration of this ceremony; he cannot find it among the laws of Christ; he has no precedent for it in the Acts of the Apostles; and unlike every institution of the Gospel, it rests upon a species of evidence, not within the grasp of ordinary capacities.

It is manifest from the mode of defence adopted by the advocates of this theory, that it can only be made to appear plausible by a laborious process of moral reasoning, and by inferences drawn from very remote premises. The man who can read the New Testament in no language but his own, whose early prejudices and habits so strongly favour infant sprinkling, that he either cannot or will not believe the plain record of the fact, that men and women only were immersed by the Apostles, must follow the learned through many perplexed and doubtful discussions: he must study the nature and design of the Abra-

hamic Covenant, the relation it bears to the present dispensation, and the points in which they are agreed ; he must understand the law of circumcision, why it was given, who were the subjects of it, and what were the blessings it sealed to them ; and then draw this logical conclusion, that *because Abraham*, by a positive divine command, circumcised his male children on the eighth day, *he* without a command is to sprinkle his female children on any day he pleases : he must be acquainted with the different modes of purification used under the law ; know what things were made clean by sprinkling, and what by immersion ; and because Moses sprinkled the vessels of the tabernacle, he is to infer that sprinkling is the proper mode of administering Baptism : he must enquire diligently about proselyte Baptism from the works of those learned men who have read the Talmud and Maimonides ; and finding by their account that the children of proselytes were baptized with their parents, he is to receive this opinion, as a warrant for the Baptism of his own children : he must learn from some one, who will read the Fathers for him, *when* this practice arose, and by what arguments they defended it ; and he must be careful to observe and remember, that the terms, to *proselyte*, to *regenerate*, to *sanctify*, in those places where *an infant is the relative*, are used figuratively for baptize, and are always to be construed in favour of

Infant Baptism. And finally, he must believe, what is contrary to truth, and to the opinion of learned men in all ages, that the original word from which we derive Baptism, signifies not only to immerse, but also to pour and to sprinkle; and that this last is as genuine a signification as the first.

This is no exaggerated account of the arguments by which we have heard Independents labour to establish the divine right of infant sprinkling; *their having recourse to such*, abundantly proves, that this system is unsupported by scriptural evidence. Are these arguments discoverable by the great bulk of professing Christians? Can that institution be of Christ which requires such a circuitous method of proof? The Baptism of believers needs no such defence; it occupies a distinguished place among the ordinances of divine worship, and brings with it directions for its observance, as well as evidence of its authority!

Again, the theory of Pædobaptism is only adapted to the constitution of a *national church*; it has a manifest tendency to unite the church and the world, and is therefore necessarily opposed to the spirit and principles of dissent. Why do we dissent from the church of England? because it is an ecclesiastical political institution, which in its constitution and government is diverse from that kingdom which is not of this

world. We believe that the church of Christ is congregational, composed of persons professing faith in his name; that its laws are derived from the sacred canon of the New Testament; that its jurisdiction is spiritual; and that the Lord Jesus is its head: but not so a national church — she records as her members, all the subjects of the realm, the greater part of whom are strangers to God, and enemies to true religion; her Christianity is political; her dominion is secular; her laws emanate from some worldly prince or ambitious pontiff, who is constituted her head; his sceptre is the organ of government; his creed the standard of her faith.

To *such a church*, Pædobaptism is an appropriate, nay an essential appendage. It is that mystic rite by which the king and the subject, the saint and the infidel, are incorporated into one body, and are alike pronounced children of God, members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven! It is the charm, whose magic spell holds in-unison these remote and jarring elements; it is the seal of priestly dominion over the consciences of men; the mark by which they are recognized as belonging to that chartered ecclesiastical corporation, which denounces all who dare to question her infallibility as schismatics, heretics, and apostates; as worthy of pains, penalties, and death!

And it is quite natural to suppose, that any

rite introduced into the Christian system upon the broad principle of circumcision, should produce such results as these ; Pædobaptism has a direct tendency to augment the power of the church, by an unhallowed confederation with the world ; to destroy that individuality of character and profession, which it is the design of the Gospel to maintain ; and to make Christianity, what Judaism was, a national religion. It lessens the importance, and in effect, denies the necessity of faith and repentance, as pre-requisites to church membership ; and it opens a wide door indeed for the admission of profligate characters into the visible kingdom of Christ — nay, by constituting them members of the church, before they can discern between good and evil, it *ensures a succession* of unregenerate profane professing Christians.

That such results as these are not visible among Pædobaptist Dissenters, is simply because they do not pursue their system to its legitimate consequences : *only let them receive the subjects of Baptism into church fellowship*, (and why not ? — they are as fit for the one as for the other,) the moral qualifications of their members would be of precisely the same character, as are those of the church of England ; and let their power be equal to their zeal for this rite, and they would speedily grow into a national church.

Again, another objection to the theory of Infant Baptism, is the contrariety of opinion which exists among those who yet most cordially espouse its general principle. This implies a deficiency of scriptural evidence to guide their decisions, as well as a want of scriptural law to regulate their practice: nor is this an unfounded assertion; for though they all agree in the general conclusion, that Infant Baptism is necessary, it is well known that they differ materially as to the premises from which they draw this conclusion; and that they flatly contradict each other as to many particulars connected with this ceremony. So palpable is this difference of opinion in the history of the present controversy, that we frequently find the most expert and zealous defenders of Pædobaptism, not only admitting the great facts from which we reason, but strenuously opposing and laboriously disproving the principles laid down by some of their own party.

They differ among themselves respecting the *mode* of baptizing infants. The Greek and oriental churches, which include one half of the Christian world, maintain that *immersion* is so essential to the validity of Baptism, that a man who has been *sprinkled only* in his infancy is deemed by them unbaptized, and is not admitted to their communion till he has been immersed; and many Protestant Pædobaptists

have been anxious that Baptism should be again performed by immersion, from an avowed conviction, in direct opposition to other Pædobaptists, that this was the primitive mode, that this alone answers to the design of the ordinance, and that sprinkling is a Popish innovation.

Nor is it in reference to the *quantity* of water, and the *manner* of its application only, that they differ, but about the *ceremonies* which are to accompany this rite. The church of Rome consecrates the baptismal water by pouring into it oil; she exorcises the child; puts salt into his mouth, spittle upon his eyes, nose, and ears; and crosses him on the forehead, neck, and breast: the church of England, and some other Protestant established churches, require a profession of faith to be made by sponsors; and that the child should be signed with the cross at his Baptism; Independents simply sprinkle a little water on the child's face, without regard to any profession of faith: and each of these contend earnestly for their own particular practice in the administration of this rite.

Pædobaptists differ among themselves, as to *whose* children are proper subjects of Baptism. Some say that the offspring of pagans, infidels, Jews, and Turks, have as just a claim, as the seed of believers; and that if they fall into the hands of Christians, they ought to be introduced

into the visible church by this ceremony: others deny this, and maintain that Baptism should be restricted to children born in Christian countries, because their parents, if not believers, are nevertheless nominal professors of Christianity. A third class contend that the offspring of believers in the evangelical sense of the term, are the only legitimate subjects of Baptism; and that to depart from this rule, is to take the children's meat, and to cast it unto dogs.

From the concessions of Pædobaptists it appears that the *authority* for Infant Baptism is the most perplexing part of their theory—it is not surprising therefore, that on *this point also*, they are much divided among themselves.

Some affirm that this rite rests upon our Lord's commission to disciple all nations, which, say they, includes the Baptism of Infants. Others deny this, and allow that neither the letter nor the spirit of this commission will admit of such an interpretation. A supposed universality of grace, is assigned by some, as a sufficient reason for baptizing infants; while those Pædobaptists who believe the doctrine of particular redemption, deny this position altogether, and in their turn bring forward circumcision as scriptural warrant for the practice; others reject circumcision as their authority, and profess to administer this rite on the ground of Jewish proselyte Baptism—while many discard these Jewish

ceremonies, and declare, that the *child's personal interest* in the covenant of grace, gives him an undoubted right to Baptism: again, this covenant relation is questioned, and the *faith of the parents* is considered as the child's only title to this privilege.

There is yet another party of Pædobaptists who disclaim all these authorities, and who consider that the *efficacy of the ordinance itself*, which they believe conveys salvation to its subjects, affords an unanswerable reason for its administration; and by others the *authority of the church* is pleaded as an infallible guide in this, as in other matters of faith and practice.

Further, Pædobaptists differ among themselves, not only about the *mode*, the *ceremonies* which should accompany, and the *authority* for practising, Infant Baptism, but also about the *end or design* of this rite. Upon this point Witsius remarks, “The question relating to the efficacy and usefulness of Christian Baptism, in reference to the elect infants of parents who are in the covenant, is peculiarly arduous and abstruse: and, as of old, so very lately, it is embarrassed by the subtlety of curious disputes.” If it be so difficult to answer the inquiry, “what benefit does Baptism confer on the *elect infants*?” it must be tenfold more difficult, if not impossible, to shew what end is answered by the Baptism of *non-elect infants*. We humbly conceive, that if

they are in the covenant, it is their *election*, and not their Baptism, that gives them a federal relation to Christ, and makes them one in covenant with God; and to talk of *putting elect infants into covenant*, those whom God hath of his own sovereign will and pleasure taken into covenant with himself, is something worse than darkening counsel by words without knowledge. And to profess to put *those* into the covenant by Baptism, who are not the children of the covenant, and who prove this but too clearly, by determinately rejecting God to the end of their days, is a presumptuous absurdity!

Viewing either side of the question, *the end* to be answered by this ceremony appears inexplicable. It is this very difficulty, which has produced the great diversity of opinion, prevailing among Pædobaptists on the subject; and it has led their different denominations to assign to it different degrees of importance, according to the spirit of their individual creeds, and the several forms of the church government.

The Greek and Romish churches represent Infant Baptism as absolutely essential to salvation. The church of England, with her Calvinistic creed, and Arminian clergy, denies that it is essential to salvation, *yet* boldly affirms that it makes its subject, “a child of God, a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” The Independents, who are tenacious

of the principles of dissent, who maintain Calvinistic doctrines, and seek to promote the purity of their churches, contend that Baptism brings children into the covenant, but not into the church. Even some of these appear to make this rite necessary to salvation, by accusing us of criminal indifference to the everlasting interests of our children, because we refuse to sprinkle them in their infancy.

There are other consequences connected with Infant Baptism which are overlooked by the Calvinistic Pædobaptist, and which are at variance with the whole of his religious system. It destroys the distinction between the church and the world maintained in the Scriptures. It practically denies the doctrines of personal election and particular redemption, for there can be no election to a particular benefit of which all are partakers: this universality of grace is strongly implied in the administration of Infant Baptism, and it is the prominent doctrine of those national establishments which pronounce every subject of their spiritual jurisdiction, a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Thus it is we find personal election, particular redemption, and justification by faith, denied by the Romish and episcopalian clergy in general — for how can they hold doctrines so subversive of the opinion that *every child* is made a subject of grace by Baptism? The fact is, that

Infant Baptism, traced to its source, and followed to its legitimate consequences, will be found to arise out of the most subtle system of Arminian policy ever devised; and to be the most powerful practical expedient for supporting and propagating the doctrines of universal grace and general redemption, within the compass of human agency. It proceeds upon the general principle, not only that all men are alike eligible to salvation, but that *grace*, of which Baptism is the outward sign and seal, is conferred upon all men.

Should the Calvinistic Pædobaptist, who sees the connection between the practice of Infant Baptism and the two grand points of Arminian theology, assert, that *he does not admit* the baptismal regeneration of the church of England, *nor yet the baptismal covenant relation* so zealously maintained by the Independents, but that he regards the ordinance as affording an opportunity of addressing parents on the duties of their parental character — then we declare that the application of water to the infant for *such a purpose merely*, is not Infant Baptism; it is a service, called indeed by that name, but not practised *till of late* by any body of professing Christians in any age or country. It is the mere act of sprinkling a child's face: it is a ceremony *sui generis*, differing in its nature, use, and design, from that general system of Pædobaptism which is a rite instituted as “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiri-

tual grace ;” and not to teach parents their duties in relation to their children !

These various conflicting opinions concerning the authority and design of a mere outward ecclesiastical ceremony, which many of its Protestant advocates have boldly affirmed is enjoined in the sacred writings, have done incalculable injury to the cause of real religion ; since they have tended to confirm men of sceptical minds in their opposition to the truth of divine revelation. For, perceiving that those who embrace the Christian system cannot arrive at any just and unanimous decision respecting the validity of a *supposed* New Testament law, they conclude that a similar obscurity invests the doctrines of Christianity, and therefore doubt the authenticity of those writings which, while they claim to be a revelation from heaven, leave their followers in a state of contentious uncertainty as to the nature and intention of their communications. Had the Protestants been wise enough to have left Pædobaptism in the bosom of that community from which they seceded, or having adopted it, had they placed it where the Papists have very properly done, among the ceremonies of their church, and not among the ordinances of the Gospel, they would, on this point at least, have screened the word of God from the attacks of some of its bitterest adversaries. But by ascribing to the Holy Scriptures a rite which is

evidently of human invention, which involves so much perplexity and contradiction in the mode of defending it, and which by being carried into general practice, is productive of results so palpably repugnant to every idea which even reason itself dictates as consistent with a divine constitution of things among men, they virtually impute to the Christian revelation an imperfection of character which has furnished the infidels of our age with some of their most powerful objections against its claims to a divine origin.

The church of Rome, deistical as many of her clergy have been known to be, and much as she has, by her gross corruption, induced a spirit of bold and turbulent infidelity throughout the states of Christendom, has, in this respect, acted with more consistency than many of the Protestants, since she has exonerated the Scriptures from the charge of enjoining the observance of a rite, which would make them inconsistent with themselves, by fixing the authority and responsibility of it upon the Hierarchy alone. She claims Infant Baptism as an institution of her own appointing; the sign of her spiritual dominion over the souls of all who are born within the pale of her worship and jurisdiction. And we know that it is testified of the *Beast*, “that he caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads.

There is yet another consequence flowing from

Pædobaptism which cannot be contemplated by the pious mind, but with feelings of the deepest regret ; and that is, the awfully delusive influence it has upon the minds of its subjects in general. With but a few exceptions, the great body of the clergy belonging to the ecclesiastical establishments believe that Infant Baptism is a divinely appointed mean of regeneration, which, by conveying grace to the heart, most certainly insures the salvation of the soul. Believing this doctrine themselves, they inculcate it upon the minds of their people, and treat as an idle fiction, the mere offspring of credulity and enthusiasm, any subsequent operation of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of those who have been baptized in their infancy.

The consequences flowing from such a system of erroneous inculcation as this, are of the most serious nature, and may be traced in that demoralized state of society which is both the characteristic and the disgrace of, what are called Christian countries. It naturally tends to render men insensible to their real character and condition in the sight of God ; it builds them up in a state of carnal security ; and it fosters in their minds the belief of opinions which if persisted in, must ultimately end in their eternal destruction. It is owing to the propagation of these papal opinions, that we see so many thousands of our countrymen, who are nominally Christians,

but practically Atheists, living in the daily violation of human and divine laws, yet fortifying themselves against the forcible appeals of Gospel truth with that vicious boldness, which is so generally inspired by the belief of false doctrines. To prove what we here affirm respecting the doctrine inculcated in connexion with Infant Baptism, we present it to the reader in the language of some of our high-church dignitaries: “ Though inculcating perpetually, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, is indispensably needful ; yet preaching the necessity of being regenerated, as a thing still absolutely wanting to a great part of those who call themselves disciples of Christ, is using a language not conformable to that of Scripture, nor indeed of the primitive Fathers, or the offices of our own liturgy ; which declares every person who is baptized, to be by that very act regenerated and grafted into the body of Christ’s church.” *—“ Our Saviour Christ altered the practice of frequent washing among the Jews in his church into a profitable sacrament — the sacrament of our regeneration or new birth — that is, Baptism. Hence it appears, that neither Scripture nor the writings of our church authorize us to call upon those who have been baptized, whether in their infancy, or at a mature age, to regenerate themselves, or to expect regeneration through the workings of the Holy

* Secker’s Sermons, vol. 5. p. 390.

Ghost. It is highly proper to exhort them to repent and reform, to preserve or to repair, that regenerate state which the Spirit once gave them; to remind them, as St. Paul reminded his converts.* But this is very different from teaching them to wait for a second regeneration — a sudden conversion — a sensible operation of the Holy Spirit affecting a total and instantaneous change in their hearts and dispositions. Regeneration of those who are already baptized by the forcible operation of the Spirit, is one of the doctrines by which the weak credulity of unthinking persons is imposed upon in the present times. It is a dangerous illusion, calculated to flatter the pride and indolence of our corrupt nature. Regeneration, then, in its true sense, signifies an inward effect produced by the Holy Ghost through the means of Baptism, whereby the person baptized exchanges his natural state in Adam for a spiritual state in Christ. Water applied outwardly to the body, together with the grace of the Holy Ghost applied inwardly to the soul, regenerates the man; or in other words, the Holy Ghost, in and by the use of water Baptism, causes the new birth. And the words ‘regeneration’ and ‘new birth’ are never used in the New Testament, or in the writings of our church, as equivalent to conversion or repentance independent of Baptism. The instantaneous conversion

* Rom. vi. 3, 4.

of persons already baptized, by the resistless and perceptible power of the Holy Ghost, and their being placed in a state of salvation from which it is impossible for them to fall, are unfounded and mischievous tenets, utterly irreconcilable with Scripture and the doctrines of the church of England." * Precisely to the same point are the declarations of Dr. Nicholls on Common Prayer; and the arguments of Dr. Mant on the Baptismal Controversy, tend to support this mistaken and pernicious principle; which is neither more nor less than the old Popish doctrine of baptismal regeneration newly vamped and dressed up in the language of Protestant bishops. Is it possible these men could believe what they have written on this subject to be consistent with the sacred oracles of eternal truth? and are we, as a necessary consequence of their position, to believe that the two hundred millions of human beings which compose, what is termed, the Christian population of Europe, all of whom having been baptized in their infancy excepting the Quakers and the Baptists, are by this rite actually and scripturally regenerated to God through the Holy Ghost? This notion is so glaringly absurd, that one can only conceive of it as being the result of Arminianism run mad: and before the priesthood could propagate a principle so pregnant with deadly consequences

* Tomlin's Refutation of Calvinism.

to the souls of men, they must themselves have drunk deeply of the intoxicating drugs of that golden cup which is full of the abominations and filthiness of the great mother of harlots, who by her various sorceries has deceived the nations of the earth.

If Infant Baptism regenerates the soul, the effects of this divine virtue must become visible in all who receive it. Here can be no deception practised, either on the part of the administrator, or the subject; no failure between the cause and the effect, since, upon the principles laid down, it is God's invariable method to regenerate all by his Holy Spirit at the time of their Baptism. Therefore being thus made free from sin, and become the servants of God, they have, of course, their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. But alas, what are the fruits which are made manifest in the lives of the great mass of those who have been baptized in their infancy? Are they not the fruits of the flesh, *adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like*? Yet, loaded as they are with these fruits of the flesh, they are taught to believe that they are the children of God by baptismal regeneration. It is evident that a Baptism, unaccompanied with any right views of our own condition as sinners, and any proper feelings towards God as our maker, can never furnish

men with motives to holiness of life. Nor is that rite which is so called, as administered by the clergy of the Hierarchy, considered as laying one man under a greater moral obligation than another, since, by a universal application it destroys all particular distinction. Hence it is, that no marked obloquy is considered as attaching to the notoriously scandalous lives of some of our great Popish and Protestant Pædobaptists, on the ground of their having violated the solemn compact made at the time of their Baptism. The measure of their guilt is estimated generally by the injury done to the laws of society, and not by any disgrace that they are supposed to have brought upon the cause of God and truth by apostatizing from a religious profession. But if a person who has been publicly baptized on a declaration of his own faith in Christ, deviates from the path of rectitude, his conduct is censured by many with a severity that would lead us to suspect that it sprang from motives less worthy than a zeal for the honour of religion; while Pædobaptist armies may meet together and murder each other by thousands, without incurring the charge of having fallen from the profession of their faith, or the danger of being turned out of the church. Whence then, we ask, that keen perceptibility of inconsistency in the one case, and that obtuseness of moral susceptibility to the delinquency in the other? Do they not

necessarily arise out of the essential qualities of the two institutions, and the different effects with which they are attended? The one is an appointment from God, which, while it conveys the most solemn instruction to the heart, furnishes the will with the most powerful moral motives to a life of holy obedience. The other is the mere invention of man, applied in a way that illustrates no truth of the Gospel, and at a time when it can make no impression upon the understanding.

Thus it is that the great body of those who profess to be Christians, being taught to believe a lie in the first instance, presume upon the mercy of God while they live in the violation of his laws, and die under the influence of a most awful and destructive delusion.

CHAPTER V.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE VARIOUS GROUNDS
ON WHICH THE PÆDOBAPTISTS HAVE ENDEA-
VOURED TO DEFEND THEIR HYPOTHESIS.

WE are now entering upon that department of our subject which comprehends the leading points in the Baptismal controversy ; but before we proceed to the examination of their respective merits, we shall lay down two propositions as exhibiting the rules by which we purpose to regulate the course of our inquiries. First, that the Bible is the only guide of faith and practice in the momentous concerns of religion. And, secondly, that what is not sanctioned by the authority of the Holy Scriptures, is not binding upon the consciences of men as a matter of duty. These are the principles upon which we wish to act ; and it is by these principles we desire that others should judge of our conduct in the prosecution of the present debate.

First, then, we believe the Bible to be the only sure and infallible guide in the great concerns of religion; the only true and sufficient ground of authority in controversies of faith and practice; and that, that part of the Bible contained in the New Testament, is sufficient to direct us in all things pertaining to the constitution, order, and worship of the Christian church. It comes with divine authority: "Thus saith the Lord;" and we therefore believe that the commandments and ordinances of Jesus Christ should be observed, both in their spirit and letter, with a fidelity proportioned to their high importance. "The Bible is the religion of Protestants;" the Bible alone is the religion of Protestant Dissenters; the magna charta of non-conformity. We need not the glosses of Fathers, the acts of Councils, nor the laws of Senates, to fix the interpretation of truths which God has revealed unto us, and which he has given us an understanding to comprehend. Animated by the sacred Spirit, and guided by the unerring truths of divine revelation, our forefathers successfully resisted that spiritual usurpation and priestly domination which sought the overthrow of civil, in the destruction of religious liberty; and we, acting under the direction of the same divine records, baptize, by immersion, adults only, and that on a credible profession of their faith. We do this, because we learn from the Bible, that it was the uniform practice of the

Apostles and first ministers of the Gospel : thus they understood and obeyed the commission of their risen Lord, and the churches which they planted were composed exclusively of persons of this description.

Secondly.—We believe that what is not sanctioned by the authority of the Holy Scriptures, is not binding upon the consciences of men. As nothing should be excluded from the worship of God which Christ hath appointed, so nothing should be added by human authority ; He alone, as legislator of his own kingdom, can alter or annul what He hath himself commanded — to interfere with the economy of things established in his church, is to be wise above what is written, and to invade the prerogative of *his* office, who is “ head over all things to his church, which is his body, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all.”

Believing then that the doctrines of men are of no authority in the church of Christ, we reject them as derogatory from the glory of the Saviour, and injurious to the interests of pure and undefiled religion : but we know that the spirit, which in very early times introduced innovation and will-worship, is gratifying to the depraved principles of human nature ; and from this source has arisen that mass of error which has beclouded the moral hemisphere of Europe, which tends to destroy the vital religion of all national establishments, and which must eventually work their

overthrow. Let those churches who profess to hold the faith once delivered to the saints, be upon their guard how they receive for doctrines of divine appointment, the commandments and traditions of men ; lest by entangling themselves with the carnal ceremonies of Antichristian churches, they imbibe their spirit and share in their final ruin.

Acting under the influence of these sentiments, we not only dissent from the established church in points of discipline, but we differ from all Pædobaptists, whether of the hierarchy or among the Dissenters, on the subject of infant sprinkling ; and we believe that they are alike erroneous respecting the true nature and design of Christian Baptism. This we shall endeavour to shew by considering the various grounds on which they endeavoured to defend that rite for which they so zealously contend.

I. The practice of baptizing infants arose out of a belief that Baptism was absolutely necessary to salvation ; and upon this principle it was strenuously defended by all the early Pædobaptists : they ascribed to the baptismal water the power of illuminating, sanctifying, and regenerating the soul, and thus they led the people to conclude, that unless they and their children were baptized, they could not be saved. Justin says, “ Baptism can cleanse, and purify only a peni-

tent ;” * he also calls it “ the water of life.” † Irenæus says, “ Christ gave to his disciples the power of regenerating to God, when he sent them to baptize.” ‡ Clemens Alexandrinus declares that “ being immersed, we are illuminated ; being illuminated, we are adopted as sons ; being adopted, we are made perfect ; being made perfect, we are rendered immortal.” § And in another place, “ Thus we who are baptized, having our sins cleansed, which in some measure darkened the divine Spirit, are free and delivered from every impediment, and have the clear vision of the Spirit, by which alone we see what is divine, the Holy Spirit from heaven being poured into us.” Tertullian held the same opinion ; he says, “ Neither do I deny that a divine benefit (that is, the blotting out of sins) is sure, to those that are about to enter the water :” || again, “ for all waters, by an ancient prerogative, become a sacrament of sanctification through prayer ; for the Spirit immediately comes from heaven and rests upon the waters, sanctifying them by himself ; and so being sanctified, they imbibe the power of sanctifying.” ** And again, “ whereas it is ordained, that no one can be saved without Baptism, by that weighty declaration of our Lord, who says, ‘ except a man shall be born of water he has no life.’ ” ††

* Contra Tryph. p. 231.

† Idem, p. 261.

‡ Adv. Hæres. iii. 17.

§ Pædag. c. i. 6.

|| De Pœnit. c. 6.

** De Baptismo.

†† Idem.

This opinion, respecting the necessity of Baptism, originated probably in a misconception of our Lord's words, "except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The early Fathers evidently considered, that to be born of water, referred to Baptism; and that the kingdom of God meant a state of future happiness; and hence they concluded that no man could be saved unless he was baptized—an inference which is correct, if the premises are admitted: but though it is highly probable that our Lord did refer to Baptism, under the expression, "born of water," yet I think it very unlikely, that he used the phrase "kingdom of God," in relation to eternal life; for such an explication of the words would render the work of the Spirit nugatory, and make our salvation depend upon an external ceremony. That the phrase "kingdom of God," does in some places refer to a state of future glory, I readily grant; but in a general way, it applies to that spiritual constitution of things, which was then about to be established in the world, under the government of Christ, called in the language of prophecy, "a kingdom which God should set up." It is in allusion to the reign of grace, or our Lord's spiritual dominion upon earth, that the terms are used in the following passages—"Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God."*—"Whereunto shall

* See Mark, i. 14, 15.

we liken the kingdom of God?" * — "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, who shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." † See also the 13th chapter of Matthew, which is full of parabolical allusions to the gospel dispensation, under the title of the kingdom of God.

These passages prove that the phrase frequently relates to Christ's spiritual dominion in this world. May not our Lord's words then, "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," be designed to shew, that no man can be a consistent subject of his kingdom, who is not both regenerated and baptized? the former being necessary to salvation, the latter to that profession of faith which he requires of all, before they are admitted to the privileges of the Gospel church. The expression, "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit," is very similar in its construction to that in Matthew iii. 11. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire." The fire is the visible representation of the Spirit; and may not the water be considered as the outward symbol of regeneration?

The doctrine of baptismal regeneration was generally believed by the Fathers of the second

* See Mark, iv. 30.

† See Mark, ix. 1. Also Luke, xvii. 20, 21; and Matt. xxi. 43.

century ; and upon this principle the first Pædobaptists introduced and defended their practice. Hear what Cyprian says in his epistle to Donatus. He declares that “previous to his conversion, it appeared impossible to him, that a man should instantly put off sin in the laver of salutary water ; but he could testify that he had experienced it, saying, by the help of the regenerating water, the pollution of the former life is washed away, a serene and purer light from above flows into the purified heart ; afterwards, a second birth ; the spirit being derived from heaven made me a new man.” In his 71st epistle to Quintus, he says, “there is one water in the holy church which makes men (Christ’s) sheep.” In his 73rd epistle to Jubainas, he says, “hence (from the time of Baptism) begins the origin of all faith, an introduction to the hope of eternal life, and a divine authority for purifying and quickening the servants of God.” Gregory Nazianzen declares,* that “they who die unbaptized, without their own fault, go neither to heaven nor hell ; but, if they have lived piously, to a middle place.” †

Chrysostom says, “it is impossible to be saved without Baptism ; and if an infant die without Baptism, through the negligence of the presbyter, woe to that presbyter ! But if, through the negli-

* Orat. xl. p. 653.

† Vid. Venemæ Hist. Eccles. tom. 3. p. 485. 664.

gence of the parents, woe to the parents of that infant!" Again in another place,* "if sudden death seize us, which God forbid, before we are baptized; though we have a thousand good qualities, there is nothing to be expected but hell." Austin, throughout his writings, defends Infant Baptism on the ground of its necessity." He says, "let us not therefore of our own head promise any eternal salvation to infants without the Baptism of Christ." "It may well be said that infants departing this life without Baptism, will be under the mildest condemnation of all; but he that affirms, that they will not be under condemnation, does much deceive us, and is deceived himself."† "The Christians of Africa do well call Baptism itself one's salvation; and the sacrament of Christ's body, one's life. From whence is this, but as I suppose from ancient apostolical tradition, by which the church of Christ do naturally hold that without Baptism, and partaking of the Lord's table, none can either come to the kingdom of God, or to salvation and eternal life." Austin then refers to the celebrated passages, Tit. iii. 5. 1 Pet. iii. 21. and John vi. 53—57. and concludes by remarking, "If then, so many divine testimonies do agree, that neither salvation, nor eternal life is to be hoped for by any, without Baptism, and the body and blood of our Lord, it is in vain promised to infants

* Hom. xxiv. in Joann.

† Wall's Hist. Inf. Bap. pt. 2. c. 6.

without them!"* In another place he says, "The whole Christian church has constantly held, that infants are baptized for forgiveness of sins;" and that he "*never read nor heard of any Christian, Catholic, or Sectary, that read otherwise, or denied it to be necessary.*"

Such then is the avowed principle upon which Infant Baptism was originally practised, and long defended! When did any Baptist, in the warmth of his zeal, for what has been styled his "darling hypothesis," utter such language? With what consistency can modern Pædobaptists charge us with "making a mere ritual ceremony of greater importance than moral virtues," when their predecessors regarded it as the fountain of grace and salvation? Why do the Independents of the present day adopt the practice, while they renounce the principle of the early Pædobaptists? If they should reply, that they have discovered this principle to be erroneous, and therefore they discard it; we would ask them to consider how far that practice can be worth retaining, which was introduced, and defended for so long a period, upon a principle so manifestly absurd and unscriptural?

II. The second plea urged in defence of Infant Baptism is grounded on the supposition, that the Jews practised a Proselyte Baptism anterior

* Wall's Hist. Inft. Bap. pt. 2. c. 9.

to the introduction of Christianity, which gave to the family of the Proselyte a right to all the privileges of the Old Testament church.

This notion has been advocated by several writers of considerable learning : but no one has laboured harder to support it, than the celebrated Dr. Lighfoot, who rests his principal arguments upon the testimony of the Talmudical writers. “ Israel, saith Maimonides, the great interpreter of the Jewish law, was admitted into the covenant by three things : namely, by Circumcision, Baptism, and Sacrifice. No man is a Proselyte until he be circumcised and baptized. You see Baptism inseparably joined to the circumcision of Proselytes. There was indeed some little distance of time ; for they were not baptized till the pain of circumcision was healed, because water might be injurious to the wound. But certainly Baptism ever followed. We acknowledge that circumcision was plainly of divine institution ; but by whom Baptism, that was inseparable from it, was instituted is doubtful.” Such is the Dr.’s authority, and the reasoning by which he endeavours to maintain, what after all, merits no higher name than a doubtful supposition. However proper it may be, in many instances, to appeal to these Jewish expositors for their interpretation of the abrogated rites of the legal economy ; yet we conceive it to be a departure from that respect which is due to divine

authority, to apply to any other source than the Bible itself, for a law that is to regulate our conduct towards God. Circumcision was a divine rite : if Baptism was appended to it as a part of the ceremony, we shall surely find it expressed in the law of the institution. If not, we are perfectly justified in concluding, notwithstanding all that the Rabbinical writers have said to the contrary, that Baptism never constituted a part of the primitive rite of circumcision, but that it was an innovation of later ages : for it cannot be supposed that the Scriptures would have been altogether silent respecting that part of the institution, which the Rabbins affirm was so essential to its right administration. Yet, that the Scriptures are silent upon this point, the reader will find by a reference to the various passages in which the rite is described. The first occurs in the 17th chapter of Genesis, where the law of circumcision was instituted, and enjoined upon Abraham and his posterity. The second is in the 12th chapter of Exodus, where the command was again renewed at the time of the passover, about 410 years after it was first given. And the third is contained in the 5th chapter of Joshua, when, about forty years after, he was commanded to circumcise the children of Israel on their entering the land of Canaan. Thus during a period of 450 years, in which the institution is delivered three several times under the imme-

diate sanction of Jehovah himself, there is no command to baptize, nor the least reference whatever to the application of water as a part of the instituted ceremony.

The first instance in which the ordinance of Baptism as a public profession of faith is spoken of in the sacred writings, is in the New Testament, where it stands in immediate connexion with the introduction of the Gospel. “The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God: John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; and there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan confessing their sins.” *

That there were divers washings under the law, no one will dispute, and from this acknowledged fact, some have inferred that the Baptism which Christ enjoined, was a rite in frequent practice among his countrymen, and being well adapted to the simplicity and purity of that order of things which he was about to introduce, he retained it as a ceremony of his dispensation: but if we examine the divers Baptisms practised by the Jews, we shall find no analogy between any of them, and the Baptism of the New Testament.

The Jewish washings were appointed on ac-

* Mark i. 4, 5.

count of ceremonial defilement, and pertained to *things* as well as *persons*; we read of the washing of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, and garments; and these washings are called Baptisms by Mark. There was also the ceremonial Baptism or washing of persons; as of the priests, the lepers, and those who had contracted any ceremonial impurity: but in those washings which were to be repeated as often as fresh defilement was incurred, there was no administrator, no profession of faith, no baptising in the name of the God of Abraham, nor of the promised Messiah, nor of any person whatever; nor is there one point of agreement between the washings under the law, and the Baptism under the Gospel, except the mere circumstance of the use of water. Surely it will be allowed by every candid inquirer that this is not a sufficient ground for the supposition that Christ borrowed his ordinance from any preceding rite.

When it is so broadly asserted, that Christian Baptism was borrowed from Jewish Proselyte Baptism, we very naturally inquire, where is this Proselyte Baptism to be found? Not in the Old Testament; for though we read of persons who undoubtedly were Proselytes, as the Shechemites in the time of Jacob, Jethro the father-in-law of Moses, Rahab and Ruth, yet not a word is said of their being baptized: it is not to be found in the Apocrypha;—and, though Christ ad-

verts in the New Testament to the zeal of the Jews in making Proselytes, no mention is made of their being baptized. Neither Philo nor Josephus, two celebrated Jewish writers, notice any such rite as practised by their countrymen; nor is it referred to by any of the Fathers of the first three centuries. The silence of such authorities is a strong proof against the existence of the ceremony in the apostolic age, and it is the opinion of some of the most learned Pædobaptists, that there is no evidence that Proselyte Baptism was practised by the Jews till after the destruction of their city: they allow that the earliest account of it is in those labyrinths of error, the Talmudical and Rabbinical writings. Of this opinion were Owen, Jennings, and Knatchbull at home — Venema, Vitringa, Carpzovius, and Wernsdorffius, abroad; all Pædobaptists.

Dr. Owen, when speaking of the ceremony of washing among the Jews, says; “ From this latter institution, which was temporary and occasional (and of this kind they had many granted to them, whilst they were in the wilderness before the giving of the law), the Rabbins have framed a Baptism for those that enter into their synagogue; a fancy too greedily embraced by some Christian writers, who would have the holy ordinance of the Church’s Baptism to be derived from thence. Nor are there the least footsteps of any such usage amongst the Jews until after

the days of John the Baptist, in imitation of whom it was first taken up by some anti-mishnical Rabbins.”* And again, “The institution of the rite of Baptism is no where mentioned in the Old Testament. There is no example of it in those ancient records, nor was it ever used in the admission of Proselytes, while the Jewish church continued. No mention of it occurs in Philo, in Josephus, in Jesus the son of Syrach, nor in the evangelical history. This Rabbinical opinion, therefore, owes its rise to the Taunerae or anti-mishnical doctors, after the destruction of their city. The opinion of some learned men, therefore, about the transferring of a Jewish baptismal rite (which in reality did not then exist) by the Lord Jesus for the use of his disciples is destitute of all probability.”†

Dr. Jennings observes: “But after all, it remains to be proved, not only that Christian Baptism was instituted in the room of Jewish Proselyte Baptism, but that the Jews had any such Baptism in our Saviour’s time. The earliest accounts we have of it are in the Mishna and Gemara, the former compiled, as the Jews assert, by Rabbi Juda in the second century, though learned men in general bring it several centuries lower; the latter not till the seventh century. There is not a word of it in Philo, nor yet in

* See Exercit. 19. 35.

† See Theologoumena, lib. 5. digress. 4.

Josephus, though he gives an account of the proselyting of the Idumeans by Hyrcanus. Indeed on this occasion he mentions only circumcision as the rite of initiation, and saith that upon receiving this rite, and living according to the Jewish law, they from that time became Jews. And notwithstanding he speaks of John's Baptism, yet it is under a very different notion from the Proselyte Baptism spoken of by the mishnical Rabbins.* And again,† “ Upon the whole it is more likely the Jews took the hint of Proselyte Baptism from the Christians after our Saviour's time, than that *He* borrowed his Baptism from theirs, which, whenever it came into practice, was one of those additions to the law of God, which he severely censures. However that may be, there wants more evidence of its being as ancient as our Saviour's time, than I apprehend can be produced, to ground any argument upon it in relation to Christian Baptism.”

Dr. Benson, another eminent Pædobaptist, says; “ I have not in the Old Testament found any instance of one person's washing another by way of consecration, purification, or sanctification: except that of Moses, his washing Aaron and his sons when he set them apart unto the office of priests.‡ I cannot find that the Jews do

* See Jewish Ant. b. 1. c. 3. p. 436.

† Ibid. p. 138.

‡ Lev. viii. 6.

at present practise any such thing as that of baptizing the Proselytes that go over to them, though they are said to make them wash themselves. Where is there any intimation of such a practice among the Jews before the coming of our Lord? If any one could produce any clear testimony of that kind from the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, Josephus, or Philo, that would be of great moment. In former times Proselytes coming over from Heathenism to the Jewish religion used to wash themselves; which is a very different thing from Baptism, or persons being washed by another. I do not absolutely deny that the Jews initiated Proselytes by Baptism, but I mention these difficulties and objections with regard to the fact.” *

But notwithstanding the plausible arguments adduced against this opinion by some of the most eminent Pædobaptist writers; if Jewish Proselyte Baptism is to be the foundation of Christian Baptism, it is most certain that the latter ought not to be administered by sprinkling, since the Jews required their Proselytes, whether men, women, or children, to dip themselves — this is allowed on all hands. Maimonides, who wrote in the twelfth century, says; “ There must be water sufficient for the dipping of the whole body of a man at once, and such the wise men reckon

* See Paraphrase and Notes on Epist. of Paul, p. 641, 642. second edit.

to be a cubit square, and three cubits in depth." And again: "Wherever washing of the flesh, and washing of clothes are mentioned in the law, nothing else is meant but the dipping of the whole body in a confluence of water, and that if he dip his whole body except the tip of his little finger he is still in his uncleanness: and that all unclean persons who are dipped in their clothes, their dipping is right, because the waters penetrate to them, not being separated by their clothes." In another place, when speaking of the manner in which a Proselyte was baptized, he says; "As soon as he grows whole of the wound of circumcision, they bring him to Baptism, and being placed in the water, they again instruct him in some weightier, and in some lighter commands of the law, which being heard, he plungeth himself, and comes up, and behold he is an Israelite in all things." The very decided manner in which the Rabbinical writers have spoken of the Jewish washing, as being performed by immersing the whole body in water, has induced Dr. Lightfoot* to confess that the Baptism performed by John, and that which was subsequently administered by the Apostles, seemed to

* The arguments of Dr. Lightfoot, Selden, and other English Pædobaptists in favour of Jewish Proselyte Baptism, have been answered in a most satisfactory manner by Buddeus, in his *Institut. Theolog. Dogmat. lib. 5. cap. 1.*, and by Wernsdorff in his tract, "*De Baptismi Christianorum Origine mere Divina.*" The learning and argument displayed in this work induced many of the German divines to give up the point as untenable.

require a total dipping. His words are ; “ That the Baptism of John was by plunging the body, after the same manner as the washing of unclean persons, and the Baptism of Proselytes was, seems to appear from those things which are related of him ; namely, that he baptized in Jordan, that he baptized in Enon, because there was much water there ; and that Christ being baptized, came up out of the water : to which that seems to be parallel.* Philip and the Eunuch went down into the water.” &c.

The accounts which the Evangelists have given us of John’s Baptism, seem to represent it as an ordinance immediately delivered from heaven, and not derived from that economy of things which was then waxing old, and ready to vanish away. The titles by which the Gospel is designated, as the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, &c., strongly suggest the idea, that it was first introduced to the notice of men by institutes peculiar to itself as coming down from above. Agreeably to this opinion, we find the inspired writers introducing John to our attention, as invested with a divine commission when he came to baptize. “ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. And he came into all the country about Jordan preaching the Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” That John did not borrow his Baptism from any

* Acts viii. 38.

similar rite existing among the Jews, is, I think, evident from the questions which were put : First, to him by the priests and Levites : and secondly, by our Lord to the chief priests and elders respecting his Baptism.

We are told, that “the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to John, saying, Who art thou ? And he confessed, and denied not ; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, Who, then, art thou Elias ? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet ? and he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou ? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself ? Now they who were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then ? If thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet ?” From this passage it is evident that a considerable sensation had been produced among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, by a report that some remarkable person was baptizing in the wilderness of Judea, and that they sent priests and Levites to ascertain who he was, and what were his claims. The Jews universally were looking for that prophet whose coming had been foretold by Moses, and who, according to general expectation, was to effect a great change in their political and ecclesiastical condition ; when therefore they heard that John administered a rite so truly original,

they sent to know who this person could be; and when he confessed that he was not Elias, nor that prophet, they immediately said, Why baptizest thou then? Where are your credentials for introducing and practising this new ceremony?

Now if Proselyte Baptism had been so common a thing among the Jews, as some suppose, can it be imagined that the inhabitants of Jerusalem would have been surprised at hearing that John was baptizing in the wilderness — or that they would have sent priests and Levites, to inquire of him who he was — or that these priests, who also were Pharisees, and of course well acquainted with the laws and customs of the Jews, would, upon seeing him baptize, ask him if he were the Christ, or that great prophet expected by all Israel? No; it appears from these very circumstances, that the ordinance of Baptism was an innovation; the novelty of which, led these people to suspect that it might be one of the rites of that new dispensation of things which was to attend the introduction of Messiah's kingdom, then so generally expected.

Again: Our Lord's question to the chief priests and elders pleads strongly for the divine authority of John's Baptism. "The Baptism of John, whence was it, from heaven or of men? And they reasoned among themselves, saying, If we shall say from heaven, He will say unto us,

why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say of men, we fear the people, for all men hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus and said, We cannot tell." Now, had the Baptism of John been borrowed from any similar rite existing among the Jews, the priests would have been at no loss to have answered our Lord's inquiry; they might have said with justice, it is taken from the traditions of the elders — nor need they have feared the indignation of the people, in openly declaring a circumstance which must have been well known to the Jews, and highly gratifying to their national vanity: that they did not so reply is an unanswerable argument against the opinion that Proselyte Baptism prevailed among the Jews in the days of Christ; and because they had no such plea, they were silent, for they did not choose to condemn themselves for not believing the testimony of one, whose message and ordinance were of divine appointment.

But allowing that the questions put to John, by the messengers sent from Jerusalem, did not refer to Baptism as an unusual rite among them, so much as it did to the authority with which he was empowered to administer it to those who were already taken into covenant with God; yet this very circumstance alone, would give to John's Baptism such an entirely new feature as would render it totally distinct from the cere-

monial washings with which they were conversant, and would place it in the light, either of a human innovation, or of a divine injunction. “The Baptism of John, whence was it, from heaven or of men?” John answers this question himself, by declaring that he was not the author, but only the administrator of this new institution.* The circumstance of one man’s dipping another, who had passed through all the forms requisite to a full admission into the church, had nothing answerable to it in the whole history of Judaism, and might as well be traced up to Adam’s washing himself, as to a proselyte’s plunging in three cubits of water. Yet, supposing (for we do not admit the case) that Proselyte Baptism was in use prior to the introduction of Christianity, and that it was practised to the extent which some affirm; the consequences deducible from this hypothesis, operate as powerfully against the present system of Pædobaptism, as they do in favour of our own peculiar practice; for the arguments in favour of Pædobaptism drawn from this source, go to prove, that it was no less a Jewish rite than circumcision, and like the rest of the ceremonial observances of that dispensation, was abolished by the introduction of a better covenant, founded upon better promises. The very assertions of our opponents on this point, establish the force of our arguments, and help

* John i. 31. 34. ; see also Luke iii. 2, 3.

to demolish their own system. "Circumcision," says Lewis, "was the initiatory rite appointed by God for the admission of Hebrew children into the established religion; but it was always, as the Jews say, attended by Baptism, which was inseparable from it, though it was not perhaps of the same divine authority. It is the general voice of the writers of that nation, that all the Israelites were entered into the covenant, among other things, by the rite of Baptism. Israel (says Maimonides, the great interpreter of the Jewish law) was admitted into the covenant by three things, by Circumcision, by Baptism, and by Sacrifice."* Here then, if we are to admit this Proselyte Baptism upon the testimony of these Rabbinical expositors, we must at the same time admit, that it was an essential part of the rite of circumcision, and that it was entirely done away with by the abrogation of the law. There is no one point which the Apostles laboured more resolutely to confirm, than that of the total rescinding of this rite with all its appendages. One of the principal charges brought against Paul was, "that he taught all the Jews among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying, that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs."† If baptizing their children was one of the cus-

* Lewis's Hebrew Antiq. vol. 2. p. 456.

† Acts xxi. 21.

toms connected with circumcision, it is here solemnly prohibited. If it were not, and Infant Baptism were, according to the will of Christ, the Apostle had here a most suitable opportunity for inculcating the one in the room of the other. His silence on this occasion, as well as what he says on another, prove to our satisfaction, that Infant Baptism is neither a part, nor a parcel of the law of the new covenant. “And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution?” But had Paul inculcated Infant Baptism as a mean of introducing children into the covenant of grace, upon the same principle as the Jews are supposed to have practised it before, he would undoubtedly have preached up a very material part of circumcision; and in so doing, the offence of the cross would have ceased, and he would probably have suffered less persecution. The hue and cry raised against Paul in Jerusalem was about the infants; what were to be their privileges under the new dispensation. This man teaches all the Jews to forsake Moses, and that they are not to proceed any longer after their ancient customs of circumcising and baptizing their children: but he no where tells us what we are to do to them instead, and how we are to get them into the church.

If the supposition be true, that the Jews initiated their children into the church by Baptism

as connected with circumcision, it involves the Apostles in a charge of a more serious nature, in the eyes of some, than even that “of excluding the whole race of infants from external church privileges.” For it incontestibly proves, that they were all Anabaptists in the true and strict sense of the term: since they immersed those who had been baptized in their infancy; and admitted none into Christian fellowship, whatever might have been their prior qualifications as the alleged children of the covenant, that did not give evidence of a real change of heart towards God, and yield themselves to the ordinance which they were commanded to administer, on a profession of faith and repentance. Such being the case, we ought not, as Baptists, to be blamed in following apostolic precedent, by re-baptizing those who at the best have only received a Jewish aspersion, before we admit them into communion with a Christian church; especially when their Baptism was unaccompanied with any tokens of a renewed state of mind, and which, like the Baptism administered to the proselytes under the law, admits them no farther than into the outer court of the Gentiles.

Though we have proceeded upon the supposition, that the Jews practised Proselyte Baptism, long before John the Baptist made his appearance, we by no means concede the point. The evidence by which our opponents endeavour to establish

this circumstance, as favourable to their theory, is, in our opinion, of too slender a nature to give to it even the air of probability. To convince the reader that we are justified in rejecting this species of Baptism as the invention of modern Jews, we shall investigate the subject, and lay before him the authority on which it rests.

Proselytes were those who, not being naturally descended from Abraham, united themselves with his children, and dwelt in the land of Israel; being designated by the name of strangers, or foreigners, in opposition to such as were native Israelites. They were of two kinds, the Proselytes of righteousness, and the Proselytes of the gate. The former united themselves with the Jews in the worship of God; and conforming to all their rites and ceremonies, were entitled to the privileges of the church as those born in the land. The latter, though they did not embrace the religion of the Jews, were permitted to dwell in the land under certain restrictions, which bound them to abjure idolatry, to revere the name of Jehovah, and to observe the sabbath-day.* Though these are called Proselytes by the Rabbinical writers, yet it is much to be disputed, whether they properly come under that denomination, since they were mostly employed as labourers and bondmen in performing the most servile work, as we learn from the circumstance of Solomon's employing

* See Exod. xxii. 20. Levit. xxiv. 16. 45, 46. Exod. xx. 10.

153,000 of them to prepare materials for the erection of the temple. *

With respect to the גרי צדק the proselytes of righteousness, the law is plain; they were required to be circumcised in the very same manner as were the Jews themselves. † If Baptism constituted a part of the rite of circumcision, it was by no means peculiar to proselytes, since the whole race of the Hebrew males must have received it in their infancy. Now had this been the case, is it likely that the Scriptures would have been silent respecting it? yet strange to say, that there is not a single hint given throughout the Bible, that ever such a practice prevailed among the Jews. The admission of Achior the Ammonite into the church in the days of Judith, is stated to have been by circumcision alone. “And when Achior had seen all the God of Israel had done, he believed in God greatly, and circumcised the flesh of his foreskin, and was joined unto the house of Israel unto this day. ‡ In an instance like this, it is surprising, that no mention is made of baptism, as one of the rites by which Proselytes are said to have been received into the church; especially if the conjectures of Grotius, Jahn, and some other biblical critics, respecting this apocryphal book are to be considered as correct, “that it was written only about 160 years before

* 2 Chron. ii. 17, 18.

† Gen. xvii. 9—15. Exod. xii. 48, 49. Numb. ix. 14. xv. 13—17.

‡ Jud. xiv. 10.

the birth of Christ," a time when many traditions and corruptions were admitted among the Jews.

From every inquiry that has been made by those who have entered most deeply into the study of Hebrew antiquities, there appears to be no evidence of the existence of this practice among the Jews, till after the final destruction of Jerusalem. It is nowhere stated by any of the prophets from Moses to Malachi. The Alexandrian Jews, the supposed authors of the Apocryphal books have never once touched upon it. John the Baptist, our Lord, and all the Apostles are silent upon the subject. Neither of the two great Jewish Historians, Philo nor Josephus, who wrote in the first century, name it. It is not to be found in the Targums of Onkelos, and Jonathan Ben Uzziel, nor has any one of the fathers, during the first 250 years of the Christian æra, alluded to the Baptism of Proselytes, as a rite observed by the Jews in their days. The first plain intimation of this Proselyte Baptism is given in the Talmud, a body of Jewish laws which was composed at different periods. The Mishna, or text is generally supposed to have been completed towards the close of the second century; the Gemaras, or commentaries, of which there are two, the Jerusalem and Babylonian, were not finished till many years after.* This, then, is the

* The learned are much divided in opinion, respecting the time when the Talmudical writings were completed. Prideaux and Mo-

source from which many learned Pædobaptists have derived their chief evidence in support of Proselyte Baptism; and it is upon the authority of those modern Jews, that they would induce us to believe that our Lord and his Apostles converted an old covenant rite into a new covenant ordinance. To rest our faith upon the testimony of such witnesses as these, is, indeed to take the blind for our guide, and to seek the living among the dead.*

sheim think, that the Mishna was finished by the close of the second century, and the Jerusalem Gemara at the end of the third. While those two great masters of Hebrew and Rabbinical learning, Owen and Gill, place the completion of these works nearly a century later, i. e. the Mishna about 200 years, after the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, and the Gemara about 100 years after the Mishna. Dr. Jennings has shewn upon the testimony of Father Morin, that even the Jerusalem Gemara could not have been written till the time of Heraclius, about the year 620, since it makes mention of the Turks; and that the Babylonian Gemara was not begun till the commencement of the seventh century, when being suspended for about 70 years on account of the wars between the Saracens and Persians, it was at length finished by one Josa. (Jennings Antiq.) Dr. Lightfoot himself, objects to the early date which some have assigned to the Jerusalem Talmud, upon grounds similar to those of Father Morin, he having discovered, that the Emperor Dioclesian is mentioned in no less than seven different places. Now, Dioclesian was elected to the empire, Sep. 284; he abdicated the throne in May 305; and died about nine years after in 313: which renders it highly improbable, that the Jerusalem Gemara was written in the third century. Brucker, in his *Historia Critica Philosophiæ*, says, that these commentaries and additions were collected by the Rabbi Jochanan ben Eliezer, probably in the fifth century.

* The internal character of these writings, is of more importance to us in the present controversy, than the disputes which have taken place among the learned with respect to their true dates. Those who have most minutely examined their contents, describe them as abounding with the grossest absurdities, and with the most blasphemous fables against Christ and his gospel. The account which Dr.

III. Following up the plan we purpose to pursue in the examination of the various grounds of

Lightfoot gives of the Talmudists, in our opinion, destroys the evidence he has derived from them in favour of Jewish Proselyte Baptism. He says: "there are some, who believe that the Holy Bible was pointed by the wise men of Tiberias. I do not wonder at the impudence of the Jews, who invented the story; but I wonder at the credulity of Christians who applaud it. Recollect, I beseech you, the names of the Rabbins of Tiberias, from the first situation of the university there, to the time that it expired: and what at length do you find, but a kind of men mad with pharisaism, bewitching with traditions and bewitched, blind, guileful, and doting, they must pardon me, if I say, magical and monstrous? Men, how unfit, how unable, how foolish, for the undertaking so divine a work! Read over the Jerusalem Talmud, and see there, how the Grand Doctors among the Rabbins of Tiberias behave themselves, how earnestly they do nothing, how childishly they handle serious matters, how much of sophistry, froth, poison, smoke, nothing at all, there is in their disputes! And if you can believe the Bible was pointed in such a school, believe also all the Talmudists write. The pointing of the Bible savours of the work of the Holy Spirit, not the work of lost, blinded, besotted men." (Lightfoot's Works, vol. 2. page 73, 74.) Such is the character which the Dr. gives of these writers; and in so doing he most effectually destroys the credibility of his own witnesses: for what court of law, or what man of common sense, would decide in favour of a cause upon the testimony of such men, unless it was corroborated by evidence of a much higher authority.

To the same purpose are the remarks of the celebrated Dr. Owen. "This at length is their oral law grown unto, and in the learning and practising of these things, consists the whole religion and worship of the Jews; there being not the most absurd saying of any of their Doctors, in those huge heaps of folly and vanity, that they do not hold to be equal unto, nay, that they are not ready to prefer before the written word, that perfect and only guide of their church, while God was pleased with it.

"In the dust of this confusion they dwell, loving this darkness more than light because their deeds are evil. Having for many generations entertained a prejudicate imagination, that these traditional figments, amongst which their crafty masters have inserted many filthy and blasphemous fables against our Lord Christ and his gospel, are of divine authority; and having utterly lost the spiritual sense of the written word, they are thus sealed up in blindness and obduracy; and shall be so, until the veil be taken away, when

Infant Baptism, we are now led to notice the Abrahamic covenant, and to enquire into the authority which it is supposed to furnish for the administration of that rite. It is generally admitted that this is the strong hold of the Pædobaptists; and they certainly have endeavoured to fortify it with all the strength of argument their cause is capable of affording.

While the ancients pleaded for Infant Baptism on the ground of its being necessary to salvation,

the appointed time of their deliverance shall come. A brief discovery of the falseness of this fancy of their oral law, which is the foundation of all that huge building of lies and vanities that their Talmuds are composed of, shall put an end to this discourse." (Dr. Owen's Exercitations, vol. 1. page 126.)

Dr. Lardner, who has examined as deeply as any man, the testimonies of the Jewish, Heathen, and early Christian writers says; "Later Jews may say, that women were initiated by Baptism. But there is no ground for it in the law of Moses. I think that women were first so honoured, and distinguished under the Gospel dispensation. Therefore, St. Paul says, that there is neither male, nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal. iii. 28. And we are assured, that when the people of Samaria believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women. Act. viii. 12. I pay no regard to what the later Jewish Rabbins say of the method of initiating proselytes, by circumcision and Baptism, and sacrifice, who have made void not only the moral, (with which our Lord not only often chargeth them, as Matt. xv. 1—9. Mar. vii. 1—13., and other places,) but also the ritual part of the law of God. Indeed, they had corrupted the Mosaic ritual, by numberless additions, before the coming of our Saviour, as appears from the text of St. Mark, just referred to. Nor have they ceased to do the like since.

"I think, as before said, that women were first baptized under the evangelical dispensation. I am also of opinion, that our blessed Lord's forerunner first made use of Baptism, as an initiating ordinance. And therefore he was called the Baptist; 'Ο Βαπτιστης, Matt. iii. 1. and in many other places. Nor am I singular in this opinion." (Dr. Lardner's Works, vol. 2. page 320.)

the more modern advocates of this theory endeavour to defend it by arguments deduced from the Abrahamic covenant, and the rite of circumcision.

Though we deny that the abrogated rites of the old covenant, are either a law, or a precedent to the church under the Gospel dispensation, yet as our opponents affirm the contrary, and defend their practice upon this principle, we will examine the evidence produced in its support, and meet it with the powerful objections which the Gospel opposes to any such imaginary transfer of Old Testament rites to the New Testament dispensation.

The propositions they endeavour to establish are —

First, That the covenant which God made with Abraham and his seed, was the covenant of grace, the same in its nature as that under which we live.

Second, That circumcision was the sign and seal of this covenant of grace, confirming all its blessings to Abraham, and to all his posterity.

Third, That circumcision is superseded by Baptism, which is in the present dispensation, what circumcision was in the former, the sign and seal of spiritual blessings.

As mistakes frequently arise from a misapplication of terms, or from a misconception of the sense in which those terms are used, it may not

be amiss to ascertain, first, what is meant by a covenant, and then to shew in what light we are to view those two great federal transactions which stand in contradistinction to each other in the sacred writings. This subject merits particular attention, since there is scarcely any point in theology on which professors in general have more dark and confused notions: and upon the right apprehension of which so much depends in giving a faithful interpretation of divine truth.

A covenant is a voluntary agreement between two or more persons, and among the ancients was generally ratified by an offering, of which the contracting parties partook before they separated, in token of mutual concurrence. Such were the covenants between Isaac and Abimelech,* and between Jacob and Laban.† In this view the word is used in reference to those solemn engagements between God and his people, which were confirmed by sacrifices; hence they are said to have “made a covenant with him by sacrifice.”‡ The most important of these federal transactions, were the covenants with Noah, Abraham, and the children of Israel at Sinai; all of which were ratified by the shedding of blood. These are never called, in Scripture language, *covenants of grace*.

The *covenant of grace*, as it is called, is fre-

* Gen. xxvi. 28. 31.

† Gen. xxxi. 44. 50.

‡ Psal. l. 5.

quently in the language of divines referred to the eternal counsel between the Father and the Son, respecting the salvation of those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. This transaction is designated by the Apostle, “the purpose of God according to election,”* “the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus ;” and was made between the Father and the Son, and not between God and Abraham. God indeed revealed it to men in the various covenants which he had made with them ; but we must be careful, as Dr. Owen has justly observed, to distinguish between the covenants which God makes with men, concerning the coming of Christ, and that everlasting covenant which he made with Christ, concerning the salvation of the elect.

“A covenant,” says Dr. Hammond, “is a mutual compact between God and man ; consisting of mercies on God’s part made over to man ; and of conditions on man’s part required of God.” This appears to be the true, natural, and prevailing signification of the term. The word ברית, which by the Seventy is uniformly rendered διαθηκη, and by our translators, covenant, has various applications in the sacred writings. It more frequently signifies a league, involving the most solemn obligations as confirmed by the blood of a sacrifice. Hence the terms, fœdera

* Rom. ix. 11.

ferire, sancire foedus, and foedera percutere, to strike or confirm a covenant; of which there are three kinds, when the conqueror imposeth laws upon the vanquished; when parties that are equal in contest make a truce or peace; and when friends bind themselves in a stricter bond of union and fidelity.*

Sometimes the word denotes the sovereign decree, or purpose of the Almighty, in reference to things where no mutual stipulations could take place.† And in other instances, it expresses the absolute promise of God, respecting what he will do for his people.‡ This diversity in the use of the term should be kept in view, lest, by mistaking one thing for another, we attach the idea of a mutual compact loaded with stipulated conditions to an act that is purely sovereign on the part of God alone, having no respect whatever to any proffered engagements on the side of man, and thus take for a conditional covenant, that which is in itself an absolute promise, or only a promissory covenant, in which God pledges himself to perform some gracious work on behalf of his people in future.§

It is further necessary, with a view to our arriving at a just conclusion on this subject, that

* Gen. viii. 20. 22.; xv. 9, 10. 18.; xxi. 22—32. Exod. xxiv. 8. Deut. vii. 9, 10, 11. Josh. ix. 15—24. Zech. ix. 11. Heb. x. 29.

† Gen. ix. 10, 11. Jer. xxxiii. 20. 25.

‡ Isa. lix. 21. Jer. xxxi. 31—35. Hos. ii. 18.

§ Gen. xxii. 16—19. Isa. xlv. 23—25.

we should have some clear and determinate ideas respecting the covenants which constitute the ground of the present debate. On this point, the theological language of the schools is generally so much at variance with the plain statements of the word of God, that to take it for our guide in solving the question before us, would be, to quit the path of sober inquiry for the regions of conjecture, and to wander perplexed and bewildered amidst the metaphysical abstractions of systematic divines. Whatever federal transactions may be supposed to have taken place between the Father and the Son in reference to the redemption of the elect, or between God and Adam as constituting the standard of man's obedience and the basis of his happiness, are points that do not pertain to the present inquiry. The covenants which we have to examine, are clearly designated in the sacred writings, "the covenants of promise,"* "the covenant of circumcision,"† "the first and the second," or as they are more generally called, "the Old and the New Covenants."‡ That these are different compacts, is, I think, evident from the manner in which they are spoken of; but to determine in what respects they differ, is the great difficulty which has hung over the investigation of this subject. The points of comparison which the Apostle institutes between the law and the Gospel, and the system

* Eph. ii. 12.

† Acts vii. 8.

‡ Heb. viii. 7. 8. 13.

of reasoning which he builds upon them, shew, that in his estimation they were perfectly distinct dispensations. This is frankly acknowledged by a most competent interpreter of holy writ. “The term new is added to distinguish it from the old covenant, that is, the dispensation of Moses. I cannot help observing by the way, that often the language of theological systems, so far from assisting us to understand the language of holy writ, tends rather to mislead us. The two covenants are always in Scripture the two dispensations, or religious institutions: that under Moses is the old; that under the Messiah is the new. I do not deny that in the latitude wherein the term is used in holy writ, the command under the sanction of death which God gave to Adam in paradise, may, like the ordinance of circumcision, with sufficient propriety, be termed a covenant; but it is pertinent to observe that it is never so denominated in Scripture; and that when mention is made in the Epistles of the two covenants, the old and the new, or the first and the second (for they are so called by way of eminence), there appears no reference to any thing that related to Adam. In all such places, Moses and Jesus are contrasted, the Jewish economy and the Christian, Mount Sinai in Arabia, whence the law was promulgated, and Mount Sion in Jerusalem, where the Gospel was first published.” *

* Dr. Campbell's Prelim. Dissert. dis. 5. par. 3.

The Apostle, when enumerating the peculiar advantages which the Jews possessed over the Gentiles, says: "To whom pertaineth the covenants, and the giving of the law," &c.* Here are covenants referred to, separate from that solemn transaction which took place at Mount Sinai, called, "the giving of the law." Whether by this expression, the Apostle intended certain federal agreements perfectly distinct in themselves, or only the frequent renewal of one and the same covenant with some additional grant made to it, is a question which deserves examination. Some are of opinion, that these "covenants" refer to the Law and the Gospel; while others again think, that they respect those various compacts which were established between God and Abraham. The Apostle, speaking of them as pertaining to the Jews, on the ground of their being the children of Abraham; and distinguishing them from the Sinaitic covenants, strongly implies, that they must be sought for during the period that intervened between the calling of that eminent Patriarch and the promulgation of the law. /

Another question of considerable weight in the present controversy, as constituting the hinge on which the whole argument rests, respects the nature of the compacts. Were they of a pure, or of a mixed character? Some are of opinion,

* Rom. ix. 4.

that there were two distinct covenants made with Abraham ; the one conveying temporal promises to his natural seed, who bore the mark of circumcision in their flesh ; the other securing spiritual blessings to his spiritual children, who like him were partakers of faith. Another class of writers think that there was but one covenant, which was of a mixed nature, containing both temporal and spiritual blessing alike applicable to all the Jews, as the descendants of Abraham, whether they believed or not. This last view of the case appears to be the real cause of all that confusion and darkness in which some writers have involved this subject ; for by thus confounding things that differ, they have darkened counsel by words without knowledge. The Law and the Gospel, or the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, are as distinct from each other, as were the two trees that stood in the midst of the garden of Eden. The blending of these two dispensations has laid the foundation of numerous errors in the religious opinions of men, and of many daring and dangerous innovations in the worship of God.

With a view to ascertain the true state of the case, we shall now proceed to examine the several accounts given of those federal transactions which took place between God and Abraham ; trace them in their connexion with each other ; and deduce from the whole such conclusions as are agreeable to the analogy of Scripture, and with

what may be conceived to be the order of the divine operations.

From the very beginning God has been pleased to reveal his intention of recovering some of the human race from the ruin of the fall, by the interposition of his own Son. This merciful design on his part, is styled in Scripture language, as we have already shewn, “The good pleasure of his will.” * “The purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” † “The eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” ‡ “And the purpose of God according to election.” § It is only among theologians, that the early communication of this design has obtained the title of “the covenant of grace.” For though it is true, that the promise made to our first parents, and which was afterwards renewed to Abraham, forms the sum and substance of the New Covenant, yet it never acquired this title from any inspired writer, till it received its accomplishment in Christ, and thus laid the foundation for a new order of things properly called “the dispensation of grace,” || in distinction from “the covenants of promise, the covenant of circumcision, and the rigorous exactions of the Sinaitic law.”

So far, therefore, from its being true, as affirmed by the Pædobaptists, “*That the Covenant which*

* Eph. i. 5.

† Ibid. ver. 11.

‡ Ibid. iii. 11.

§ Rom. ix. 11.

|| Eph. iii. 2.

God made with Abraham was the Covenant of Grace, the same in its nature as that under which we live," the position itself is in direct opposition to the testimony of Scripture. For nearly 1300 years after the date of the Abrahamic covenant, God declared that the covenant of grace then remained to be made. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah : not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt ; which my covenant they brake, &c. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel ; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts ; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."* Here we have the distinguishing characteristics of the dispensation of grace, and such the Apostle declares it to be.† But how could it have been said, in the days of Jeremiah, that this new covenant remained to be made with the house of Israel, if, according to the above position, "it had already been made with Abraham and the whole of his posterity, and signed and sealed to them by the rite of circumcision?" There is no distinction in the whole compass of revealed truth that is more clearly and determinately marked, than that which sub-

* Jer. xxxi. 31, 32, 33.

† Heb. viii. 7—13.

sists between the Old and the New Testaments ; and the confounding of these two, which so essentially differ in themselves, is the cause of many of those evils which have crept into the church of Christ.

The revelation of the eternal purpose of mercy in Christ Jesus, has formed a primary and important feature in all the great transactions which have taken place between God and man, in every age of the world. It was first made known to Adam, in that obscure but merciful promise, “the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent,”* and was very probably accompanied with a sacrifice as its irrevocable seal. It was then renewed to Noah and his sons : “and God spake unto Noah and to his sons with him, saying, and I, behold, I establish *my covenant* with you, and with your seed after you.”† The sacrifice that Noah offered to God on this occasion, was not merely an expression of his gratitude for past deliverance, but of his faith in the first promise ; and was designed to typify the true sacrifice of Christ, which had been prefigured in the earliest sacrificial institutions. The renewal of this covenant with Noah, was accompanied with an additional revelation ; for the Lord assured him that the first promise should be accomplished in the seed of his first-born. “I will enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.”‡

* Gen iii. 15.

† Ibid. ix. 8, 9.

‡ Ibid. ver. 27.

Through the several ages that preceded the coming of the Messiah, the belief of this promise, and the patient hope of the blessing contained in it, distinguished the seed of the righteous from the seed of the serpent, and opened to them the only way of pardon, life and salvation. It was, therefore necessary, according to the purposes which God had in view, that the sum and substance of the first promise should be revealed to Abraham, in order that his faith and hope might be fixed on Christ. The peculiar circumstances under which this promise was first made to Abraham, and the manner in which it was confirmed, not only to himself, but to others who were to stand related to him,* constitute what the Apostle calls “the covenants of promise;” and the fulfilment of the same in the person of Christ, is that which the Scriptures designate “the new covenant,” or “the dispensation of grace.”*

The first communication made to Abraham, on this subject, was at Ur, in the land of Chaldea, when God commanded him to leave his father’s house, saying : “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”† This passage deserves particular attention, as containing the first act in a

* Gen. xxvi. 4; xxviii. 13, 14,

† Heb. viii. 13; xii. 24. Eph. iii. 2.

† Gen. xii. 1, 2, 3.

series of events which point out the distinct natures of the two dispensations. Here then, we see God making his election of the person with whom he intended to enter into covenant, and calling him away from his kindred as a preparatory step to the accomplishment of his future purposes. It is not here said, what God had done, nor what he was then doing: but what he would do. “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee.” This circumstance, when alluded to in the sacred writings, is generally spoken of as the call of Abraham, a preliminary which was necessary to all the events which were subsequently to take place.* The covenant with Abraham was yet prospective, though the ground on which it was to be established was now prepared; and his call at this time, together with the promises which accompanied it, may be considered as constituting the true foundation of the covenant, in as much as they predicted its absolute certainty.

It is from this point, as preparatory to all those grand and solemn undertakings which afterwards took place between God and Abraham, that the Apostle takes his date, when informing the Galatians of the first discoveries of the Gospel made to the great father of the Hebrew nation. “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the

* Isai. xli. 2., li. 1, 2. Acts vii. 2—6.

Gospel unto Abraham, saying: in thee shall all nations be blessed. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was 430 years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.” * The Apostle here gives us the true interpretation of the promise; and though he styles the event with which it stands connected, “The covenant that was confirmed,” yet it must be considered in the restricted sense of a free promissory grant on the part of God himself, and not as is commonly understood by the term, a mutual compact founded on stipulated conditions.

Nor do I see how it can be regarded in any other light than a free discovery of God’s gracious purpose towards Abraham in constituting him, according to the flesh, the father of the promised seed, and thus revealing to him the method of salvation that was to be published under the Gospel dispensation.

In the same chapter we are informed that Abraham, in the 75th year of his age, departed from Haran and came to the plain of Moreh in the land of Canaan, where the Lord appeared unto him again, saying: — “Unto thy seed will I give this land.” † Here is an enlargement of the first

* Gal. iii. 8, 16, 17.

† Ibid. ver. 7.

promise, containing a fresh discovery of the divine intention. God had declared that he would make Abraham a great name, by making him the father of a numerous progeny ; he now promises to give him a place where he and his promised seed may dwell.

The next interview we have with this illustrious character is in the 15th chapter of Genesis, when, about eight years after his call, God appeared to him in the plain of Mamre, saying ; “ I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” “ Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them : and he said unto him, so shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord ; and he accounted to him for righteousness. And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.” * On this occasion the whole extent of the land of Canaan was conveyed over to Abraham by a special divine grant, which was ratified by a sacrifice. “ In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.” †

Thus far we have noticed the two promissory covenants, or “ covenants of promise,” as the Apostle styles them, ‡ which God of his own

* Ver. 1. 5, 6, 7.

† See ver. 8, 9, 10, 17, 18.

‡ Eph. ii. 12.

sovereign pleasure made with Abraham. The inquiry now is, were they of a pure or of a mixed character? To whom did they pertain? Had the whole Hebrew nation a special interest in them on the ground of their natural descent from that eminent patriarch; or did they respect those only, whether Jews or Gentiles, who, believing in Christ the true promised seed, were the children of Abraham, by faith, and consequently the heirs of the promise?

From the train of reasoning pursued by the Apostle in the 4th chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, and again in the 3rd chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians, as founded upon the above transactions, it is evident, that the seed hitherto spoken of, is Christ; and that the promises made to Abraham up to this period had a reference to this glorious and divine person. The covenant into which God at this time entered was not with Abraham and the Jews, as his natural seed, but with him and Christ as his spiritual seed. It is therefore styled “the covenant that was ratified in, or concerning Christ;” in which was exhibited the grand object of that faith which Abraham had, being uncircumcised, and by which he was justified, God having imputed it to him for righteousness.*

The great error into which most writers on this subject have fallen, is that of representing this

* Rom. iv. 3. 9, 10.

covenant as pertaining to seeds, and thereby including the natural as well as the spiritual children of Abraham in its blessings. Whereas the Apostle positively affirms that this was not the case. “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.” And again; “For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”* Thus far then it appears, according to the interpretation of the Apostle, that the promises contained in this covenant were spiritual and eternal, having an entire respect to Christ, in whom they were to receive their accomplishment, and by whom that order of things was to be introduced which is now called the covenant, or dispensation of grace.

We are willing to go the whole length of our Independent brethren in acknowledging, that this was a most glorious discovery of God’s purposes of grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, which were to be accomplished in the fulness of the times;

* Gal. iii. 16. Rom. iv. 13, 14, 17. Gal. iii. 29.

but we deny the truth of their position, that it was the covenant of grace established and ratified with Abraham and the whole of his natural posterity; and this we do for the following obvious reasons. First: The new covenant was to embrace both Jews and Gentiles, and was to be acted upon agreeably to this its intended latitude immediately it was ratified by that sacrifice which was to establish its authority, and perpetuate its efficacy. Now the covenant which was fulfilled with the Jews as the children of Abraham did not extend to the Gentiles, and therefore could not be that covenant of grace which was, by a divine appointment, to include both in its special blessings. Secondly: The new covenant was to be introduced and established among men by the death of Jesus Christ, and not by a sacrifice of birds and of beasts as was that which Abraham offered before God. It is upon this grand and acknowledged principle, that it is spoken of as founded in the blood of Christ; and the blood of Christ is, on this account, styled the blood of the new covenant;* but the propriety of such language might be justly disputed, if it be affirmed, that the dispensation under which we live was in full and active operation among the Jews; for what consistency could there be in the Apostles telling us that the new covenant came in with the death of Christ, when according to the

* See Matt. xxvi. 28. Luke xxii. 20. 1 Cor. xi. 25. Heb. xiii. 20.

principles laid down by our opponents, it had been established with a whole nation nearly 2000 years before in the blood of an animal sacrifice. Thirdly: This notion, "that the Abrahamic covenant was the covenant of grace, the same under which we live," introduces confusion into the revealed order of the divine operations, and renders all that the Prophets and Apostles have said respecting the distinct nature of the two dispensations contradictory and unintelligible; and this is the real cause, we believe, why so much confusion exists in some men's minds on this subject.

We here pause, for the purpose of taking a review of this part of our subject, before we advance to the consideration of the covenant of circumcision. The arguments we have already adduced, proceed upon the principle, that the communications made to Abraham up to this period, were purely of a spiritual nature, being what the Apostle calls "the Gospel preached unto him." That the seed so frequently promised to him, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, was Christ. And that his being constituted the father of a great nation, or a multitude of nations, did not respect those political bodies of men which have sprung from him as the Israelites, Ishmaelites, Midianites, several tribes of the Saracens and Arabians, and some of the families of the East; but that im-

mense multitudes of believers, gathered out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who should own Abraham for their spiritual father as being blessed in Christ his spiritual seed. We therefore consider that the above engagements, called covenants of promise, were made personally with Abraham as the father of the faithful; and that the Jews were included in them, only on the same ground as were the Gentiles, by their believing in Christ. This the Scriptures affirm in the most positive manner. “Therefore it (the promissory covenant made with Abraham before he was circumcised) is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.”* “For they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.”†

In order to fulfil this promise, now so clearly revealed, it was necessary that Abraham should have a seed according to the flesh, from whom the Messiah should spring; and also that the posterity of this seed should be kept distinct and separate, till the object of the promise should appear. In perfect harmony with these designs, we find God promising him a son. “He that shall come forth out of thine own bowels, shall be thine heir.”‡

* Rom. iv. 16.

† Gal. iii. 7.

‡ Gen. xv. 4.

The first promise, “in thee, or in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed,” was spiritual and everlasting, referring to the salvation of the elect: this second promise, “he that cometh forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir,” was earthly and temporal, applying to the descendants of Abraham, according to the flesh; through whom, as instruments, the first was to be accomplished. Thus these two promises pointed to two objects very distinct from each other, yet, in the economy of the divine government, intimately and necessarily connected, as means and end: — Abraham and his natural seed, Christ and his spiritual seed. These two promises, the one spiritual, the other temporal, laid the foundation of those distinct relations which were peculiar to the Jewish dispensation. Jehovah sustained a two-fold relation to the Jews — spiritual and political; the first included those only, who were chosen to eternal life; the second pertained to the whole nation, and ceased when the purpose in which it originated was fulfilled. Abraham likewise held a two-fold relation: for while he was the spiritual head and representative of those who, like himself, believed in the first promise, he was the father of all the Jews according to the flesh. The Jews too, as a people, sustained a two-fold character, for while some of them were the spiritual seed of Abraham, and children of God by faith in him

who was to come, they were all the natural descendants of Abraham, and they all had a political relation to the God of Abraham. There are certainly no such natural and political relations under the Gospel dispensation.

These two promises, which constituted Abraham the father of two distinct seeds in one visible political body, led to the third transaction between God and him, recorded in Gen. xvii., which took place sixteen years after. "And when Abraham was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared unto him and said, I am the Almighty God ; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession ; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou and thy seed after thee in their generation. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee ; every man-child among you shall be circumcised, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money,

must needs be circumcised : and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child, that soul shall be cut off from his people : he hath broken my covenant." *

The transaction recorded in this chapter, has, in the language of theology, obtained the name of the Abrahamic covenant. In the New Testament it is called the covenant of circumcision ; † and as such, it stands distinguished from the freedom of the former promises, by the stipulations it prescribed, and the heavy penalties it threatened. The former transactions between God and Abraham consisted of free promises on the part of God himself ; but in this we see certain stipulations enjoined on Abraham, which involved a dreadful penalty ; and it was at the peril both of himself and of his posterity not to observe them. ‡ If therefore the title of the Abrahamic covenant be assumed on the supposition that all the former compacts were so merged in this as to constitute but one covenant with Abraham, we object to the appropriation of the term, as contrary to the express judgment of the Apostle Paul, who not only mentions more covenants than one, but specifies their distinct natures in the titles which he gives them ; and most decidedly affirms that circumcision, the seal and sign of this covenant, was a

* Gen. xvii. 1—15.

† Acts vii. 8.

‡ See Exod. iv. 24, 25, 26.

legal rite, binding all its subjects to a strict observance of every command which the law enjoined.* But if this title be employed to distinguish the present compact from the previous transactions on the ground of its stipulatory form and conditions, we see no objection to such an application of it; and it is in this latter sense that we must be considered as using the term.

That the Abrahamic covenant is not, as the Independents affirm, the pure covenant of grace, is evident from an appeal to the facts of the case. In this federal transaction there were certain stipulated conditions, the faithful observance of which constituted the very bond of the covenant. Abraham was to circumcise every male born in his house, or bought with his money: he was to walk before God, and to be perfect—while God engaged, on his part, to “be a God to Abraham, and to his seed after him.” If this reciprocal engagement was the covenant of redemption, then salvation to the Jews was made to depend upon obedience to a positive command, and Abraham is the Saviour of mankind, and not Jesus Christ.

Again, this covenant with Abraham related to the temporal, or second promise;—“thou shalt be a father of many nations—I will make thee exceeding fruitful—I will make nations of thee—kings shall come out of thee—I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein

† Rom. ii. 25. Gal. v. 2, 3, 4.

thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan." Here is no mention of the first promise, "in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed;" but a particular enumeration of events which received a literal accomplishment.

To this it may be replied, as indeed it is by many, that the term *everlasting*, being applied to this covenant, identifies it as the covenant of grace. In meeting this objection, we beg leave to observe, that the word *everlasting*, where it occurs in the sacred writings, must be understood agreeably to the nature of the things themselves, with which it stands associated. When it is used in reference to the perfections of God, or the felicity of the righteous, it denotes their endless duration; but when ascribed, as in the case before us, to that dispensation of things which characterized the Old Testament, it intended no more than the perpetual and unalterable order of those things so long as they should continue. Thus it is said of Aaron and his sons, "that their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood through all their generations."* This appointment was a fundamental part of the religious system then established, and its strict observance was so necessary to preserve that economy from an entire subversion, that God in the course of his providence so ordered it, that the priests of the family of Aaron increased and continued until

the economy itself under which they ministered was wholly abolished by the introduction of a better dispensation. The same will apply to the covenant before us. It was to be an everlasting covenant with Abraham and his seed *in their generations*, as in the case of the priesthood: and so long as these generations continued in their political and ecclesiastical relation to each other as a nation, so long was this covenant to be in force among them. To every candid inquirer into this subject it must appear evident, that more than this could not be intended; since the seal was to be as perpetual as the covenant itself, and both were to be alike everlasting. “This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. *And my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.* And the uncircumcised man-child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; *he hath broken my covenant.*” Here it is shewn that this covenant was to continue as long as the rite of circumcision was practised in all their generations; this being the token of its existence among them. If one man could break this covenant in reference to himself by the neglect of the specified rite, surely it must be allowed as a

necessary consequence that the covenant itself became defunct when the token of it was abolished among the Jews; and this the Apostle assures us was the case by the coming of Jesus Christ.

Again, this covenant included the *whole posterity* of Abraham;—can this be said of the covenant of grace? The Scriptures declare that “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children.” The covenant of circumcision, in direct opposition to this declaration, did belong to all Abraham’s children according to the flesh; and they who were not partakers of his faith, were nevertheless partakers of the temporal promises.

Again, the sentence pronounced against the transgressor, proves that this was not the covenant of grace; “the soul that is not circumcised shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.” This is not the spirit and language of the Gospel, but of the law. Nor can the principles, here laid down, be admitted as applicable to the covenant of grace, without maintaining sentiments subversive of the truth. The Abrahamic covenant was liable to be broken; it was frequently broken by the Jews;* and its promised blessings belonged to all who were circumcised, irrespective of their faith. Are these the principles of the present dispensation? Can

* Ezek. xliv. 7.

the Gospel covenant be broken? Does the possession of its blessings depend upon Baptism? Is the neglect of its ritual ceremonies threatened with capital punishment? If not, then was there a material difference between the Abrahamic covenant and the covenant of grace!

Yet we are told by the Pædobaptists, "That circumcision was the sign and seal of the covenant of grace, confirming all its blessings to Abraham and his posterity." We shall therefore inquire how this assertion agrees with the facts of the case, and with the sentiments of the New Testament writers. And here, acting upon the same principle as we have through the whole of this discussion, that of founding our arguments upon a consistent and harmonious interpretation of Scripture, we observe, that circumcision is never called a seal of the covenant of grace by any inspired writer—yet, as our opponents affirm that it was such, we ask them, what spiritual blessings did it seal? Was it the pledge of adoption, pardon, justification, and redemption to the Jews? Were they circumcised because they had been chosen to eternal life, or were they chosen to eternal life because they were circumcised? Certainly, if circumcision was a seal of grace, then grace must either have preceded, or succeeded this ceremony.

When the Pædobaptists assert that circumci-

sion was the seal of the covenant of grace, do they really believe, that this rite was an infallible token of personal interest in spiritual blessings, to *every one who received it*? If they do, it follows of course, that they believe grace to have been universal, and redemption general, to all Abraham's seed; and how is it, that they maintain grace to be sovereign in its display, and redemption particular in its application, under the present dispensation, since in their opinion, the Abrahamic covenant and the covenant of grace are one and the same thing?

If they do not believe that circumcision was an infallible token of grace to all who received it, we are utterly at a loss to imagine what they mean, by sealing with the seal of grace — and they themselves must confess, that for a man to receive this seal, and yet not possess the grace so sealed, would be a fearful anomaly in the divine conduct!

Moreover, they must know, that God commanded many to be circumcised, who did not enjoy the blessings promised to Abraham; upon their own ground then, circumcision was not in many instances a seal of the covenant of grace, unless it be supposed that God gave the pledge, where he withheld the blessing. Let them tell us what benefit, either spiritual or temporal, was secured to Ishmael, Esau, and the sons of Abraham by Keturah. If the Abrahamic covenant

was the covenant of grace, circumcision should not have been administered to Ishmael, as a token of his interest in it, since he was positively excluded. Neither could it have been a token to him, or his posterity, of temporal possessions in the land of Canaan, because they never realised an interest in that inheritance. The same may be said of Esau, and of the children of Keturah, and of many of the Israelites — they who came out of Egypt were all circumcised, but not as a seal of grace, for many of them perished in the wilderness, through unbelief; and for more than four hundred years after this rite was instituted, not one of Abraham's descendants inherited the promised land: nor was the land of Canaan conveyed to the Jews by circumcision, but by a promise made to Abraham, more than twenty years before he was circumcised.

Circumcision has both a literal and spiritual signification, as had all the typical ordinances of the legal dispensation. It was a permanent sign, or standing memorial of two important facts — first, of God's promise to Abraham, to multiply his seed, and to give unto them the land of Canaan, for a perpetual inheritance. "I will make thee exceeding fruitful: and ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you." Hence circumcision was to be an indelible mark

in the flesh of all the Jews, proving their descent from Abraham, and the faithfulness of God, in the fulfilment of this promise; and it served to keep them a distinct people till the Messiah came. No aliens could obtrude into their community without being discovered; neither could *they* mix with other nations without being known. In all their revolutions they continued a separate people; “Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.”

Again, circumcision was a perpetual memorial that righteousness could not be obtained by the works of the law, but by faith in the promised Messiah. Thus the Jews were taught, that if they would be righteous in the sight of God, they must have the faith of their father Abraham. The Apostle calls it “a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he* had being yet uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.” If Dr. Lightfoot’s version of this passage be correct, then the arguments adduced from it in favour of Pædobaptism are perfectly fallacious. He renders it, “and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, *which should hereafter be in uncircumcision. Which should be, not which had been.* Not what had been to Abraham as yet uncircumcised; but

which should be to his seed uncircumcised ; that is, to Gentiles who should hereafter imitate the faith of Abraham.”* This eminent critic shews that circumcision was not a seal of Abraham’s faith and personal righteousness, but of *that righteousness*, which was imputed to him through faith, *prior* to circumcision ; and which should be imputed to the Gentiles also who believed though uncircumcised. This view of the passage agrees with the whole of the Apostle’s reasoning. If then this rite was *not* a seal of faith to Abraham who actually believed before he was circumcised, how could it have been such to his natural descendants ? If on the contrary it *was* a seal of Abraham’s faith and righteousness, it must have been so in relation to *himself alone* : and not to infants of eight days old, who were incapable of believing : neither could it seal *that righteousness* to them which was imputed to those only who believed. To make circumcision, therefore, the seal of the righteousness of faith to those who did not believe, implies that they inherited this blessing in virtue of their descent from Abraham, though destitute of his faith ; nor upon any other ground can an argument be supported from this passage in favour of Infant Baptism.

Another position which the Pædobaptists strenuously maintain is, “ That circumcision is su-

* Horæ Heb. 1 Cor. vii. 19.

perseded by Baptism, which is, under the present dispensation, what circumcision was in the former, the seal of spiritual blessings."

"Circumcision," says a late Pædobaptist writer, "is abolished; Baptism is established. What then are the plain, the direct, the legitimate inferences? Circumcision is superseded by Baptism. Baptism is under the New Testament, what circumcision was under the old — this is the first inference — this second is, that Baptism is to be administered to infants."

Whether the above paragraph is to be ranked under the term logic, argument, sense, or nonsense, we must leave our readers to determine; but for our own parts, we confess, that we never saw logic chopped so small before.

Infant Baptism, then, according to the Independents, rests upon *mere inference* drawn from a supposed analogy between circumcision and Baptism. Is not this mode of analogical reasoning contrary to the nature of positive institutions? Is it not a tacit confession, nay, a direct proof, that they have no authority from Christ or his Apostles, for their practice? When did God authorise the church to establish ordinances upon inferential laws? Is not such a method contrary to the whole economy of his government? The church of Rome, by this process of analogical reasoning, has transplanted nearly all the ceremonies of the old covenant into her worship, till

it is become a pseudo-judaic system. And if the *Independents infer* that because Abraham circumcised his children, therefore they are to sprinkle their offspring, why may not the *Papists also infer*, that because the Jewish church had a visible head in the person of the high priest, therefore the Christian church should have a visible head in the person of the pope ; and why may not the *Episcopalians also infer*, that because the priests under the former dispensation received tythes, therefore the ministers of the sanctuary may now demand a tenth of the produce of the land ? Is not the inference in these latter instances, at least *as plain, as direct, as legitimate*, as in the former ?

But surely analogical evidence, which can never amount to more than possible presumption, or mere probability, should not be admitted as authority in the worship of God ; and *we* maintain that no ordinance should be recognized as divinely appointed, upon any evidence, short of demonstrative proof.

As Infant Baptism, however, is practised and defended upon a supposed analogy between the old and the new covenant, the more numerous the points of agreement, the stronger will be the evidence in its support ; if, on the contrary, this analogy be found to be incomplete, the ground on which Pædobaptism rests, is proportionally weak. Let us examine the case.

The covenant of circumcision was made with Abraham, and all his seed according to the flesh. The covenant of grace was made with Christ and all his spiritual seed. At the commencement then, here is a discrepancy in the constitution of the two covenants, for they were made with two distinct seeds; and before they can be analogous, Christ, like Abraham, must have a seed according to the flesh.

Abraham was the federal head and representative of a particular nation, a body politic, to whom the old covenant was restricted. Christ is not the head of a politically organised kingdom—his people are not a body politic, nor is the covenant of grace confined to any particular nation.

The covenant of circumcision brought all the Jews into an external and temporal relation to God—the covenant of grace effects no such union; nor are any people politically related to God, merely because the Gospel is dispensed among them.

Circumcision was positively enjoined on all the male posterity of Abraham, to identify them as his children—but where is it said, under the new covenant, “ye shall baptize your children in all their generations?” If God had designed the Baptism of all infants born under the Gospel dispensation, would he have been entirely silent on the subject, when he gave so express a command

to the Jews respecting circumcision? *Could this be established*, then we should not hesitate to say, that the Gospel is not so clear and definite in its enactments as the law.

Circumcision was to be administered to males only, and those of every class and condition; and it was not to be dispensed with, under the severest penalty — “he that is born in thy house and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised. The soul that is not circumcised, shall not be cut off from his people.” Where is Baptism commanded to be administered in this indiscriminate way? Is any believer under a solemn obligation to baptize every male in his house, whether converted to God, or not? -

Had circumcision been restricted to the *children of believing Jews*, the inference drawn by the Independents would be analogical: but the law of the case is against them here — for if circumcision is to be the rule of Baptism, then should the latter be administered universally, without respect to moral or spiritual qualifications; because an infant that was born in fornication, and an adult who had no faith, were legitimate subjects of circumcision. Can this be said of Baptism? Do the Independents themselves maintain this sentiment? If not, the supposed analogy between the two ordinances is destroyed. The churches of Rome and England certainly under-

stand the doctrine of analogy better than the Independents, at least they act more conformably to its spirit : they know that circumcision was a universal national rite, applicable to every man who dwelt in the land of Canaan ; and because they believe that Baptism supersedes circumcision, they baptize every one within the pale of their respective churches. This is consistent ; for it must be allowed, that if indeed circumcision prefigured Baptism, there ought to be an agreement between the type and the antitype ; and if the one ceremony is to guide us in the administration of the other, the law of the case will be as follows : —

Circumcision was administered universally throughout the land of Canaan — Baptism should be administered universally in England, or any other country where the Gospel is preached. Only males were circumcised — only males should be baptized. Faith, neither personal nor relative, was a condition of circumcision. Faith as a prerequisite to Baptism, should not be required either in the child or in the parent. All children who were circumcised, partook of the passover — all children who were baptized, should receive the Lord's supper. All children who were circumcised, were thenceforth considered members of the Jewish church ; and without any subsequent conversion or profession of faith, were entitled to all its privileges — all

children who are baptized, should be received as members of the visible church of Christ, and have a right to *its* privileges, independent of any work of grace, or profession of faith in their future lives.

Such are the consequences of pursuing this course of analogical reasoning — and if our Independent brethren are not prepared to follow it in all its practical results, they had better leave it to Papists and Episcopalians, and keep to the word of the Lord.

That the old covenant had a typical meaning, and was a shadow of good things to come, we believe; and we believe also, that the analogical evidence, as it is called, is on our side, when the law of comparison is fairly pursued. Abraham was the head and representative of the Jewish church — Christ is the head and representative of the Christian church. Abraham had a numerous seed according to the flesh — Christ has a numerous seed according to the Spirit. Abraham and all his seed were circumcised — Christ was baptized himself, and has, commanded his seed to be baptized also. Circumcision introduced the children of Abraham into the congregation of Israel — Baptism introduces the seed of Christ into his visible church. All who were not of Abraham's seed were aliens and strangers — all who were not of the seed of Christ, are excluded from the blessings of the covenant of grace.

In summing up our views on this subject, we observe that the promise made to Abraham was the same in its purport as that which was made to our first parents ; being a gracious declaration of God's purposes of mercy through Jesus Christ. That it was made personally to Abraham, as being divinely constituted the typical head of all them that believe ; and that it had respect to none but the elect of God, of whom Abraham was the personal representative. With a view to secure the ends of this divine purpose, now so clearly revealed to Abraham, various promises of a temporal nature were added, such as a son in his old age, a numerous posterity, and the land of Canaan for an inheritance. To distinguish his descendants from other nations, the rite of circumcision was enjoined on all the males, which was to be observed throughout their generations as the secret memorial of their descent, and the indelible mark of Judaism. In process of time, when the posterity of this eminent patriarch had greatly increased, God enters into a federal relation with them as a nation at Mount Sinai, in which he promises to be their God and King ; and they engage to be his people, walking in the observance of his commandments. This transaction is called by the inspired writers the first or old covenant, in contradistinction to the second or new covenant, to which it stood opposed in its constitution, it being a covenant of works ; * in its

ceremonies, which were carnal, pertaining only to the purifying of the flesh;* in its spirit, which was a spirit of bondage and death, inspiring the mind with the most fearful apprehensions of the majesty and justice of God;† and in the period of its duration, which was only to continue till the way was prepared for the introduction of the Gospel. This Sinaitic transaction, armed as it was with so many terrors, possessing as it did so many burdensome rites, and inflicting, as its whole history proves, such severe penalties on the least infraction of its prescribed regulations, can never, with any regard to propriety of language, be called *the covenant of grace*. It could neither disannul, nor fulfil, the promises of the Gospel; nor in any one instance did it ever promise or impart eternal life to the penitent transgressor. It will probably be asked, was the church under the Sinaitic covenant left wholly without the means of salvation? Certainly not. The promise made to Abraham revealed the way of salvation to those who like him believed in it: but this promise constituted no part of the law; nor was the law comprehended in this promise. This Moses himself declares, when he says; “The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.”‡ What he says more fully on this point in another

* Heb. ix. 10—13.

† Gal. iv. 23—31. Heb. xii. 18—23.

‡ Deut. v. 3.

place, proves that it was altogether a politico-ecclesiastical covenant made with the whole nation, even with their slaves, their captives, their hewers of wood and their drawers of water.* The law by its various rites and ceremonies shadowed forth the substance of the Abrahamic promise, and helped to keep it in view until the time of its accomplishment. It therefore became a typical instructor pointing to Christ, as stated by the Apostle. "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgression, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.—Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."† Hence we conclude that the promise made to Abraham concerning Christ, had a special reference to those who were spiritually his children by faith; and that the covenant delivered at Sinai was a mere covenant of works embracing the whole of his natural posterity, and was to continue till the Gospel, the true covenant of grace, was introduced by the coming of Jesus Christ.

* See Deut. xxix. 9—16.

† Gal. iii. 19, 21, 22, 24.

IV. As some of the Pædobaptists have appealed to the authority of tradition in support of their theory, we shall briefly examine what claims it has to be considered an authentic rule to the church of Christ.

“Tradition,” says the celebrated Jeremy Taylor, “is no repository of articles of faith, and therefore the not following it is no argument of heresy; for besides that I have shewed Scripture in its plain expresses to be an abundant rule of faith and manners, tradition is a topic as fallible as any other; so fallible that it cannot be sufficient evidence to any man in a matter of faith or question of heresy.”

Can any consistent dissenter imagine, that the great founder of Christianity, who condemned the effects of tradition on the minds of the Jews in turning them from the commandments of God, would himself authorize this method of instruction under the Gospel dispensation, and thus prepare the way for the subversion of his own system? The nature and consequences of traditionary instruction, are arguments against its having originated with any inspired instructor. When we recollect the variety of opinions which men hold on the same subject, the liability of the best of men to misconceive the plainest truths, and the propensity in all men to propagate truth in the form under which they embrace it; is it not manifest that this scheme of regulating the

faith and practice of the church must inevitably tend to corrupt its doctrines and to change its worship? If then tradition, in the hands of men of upright minds and honest intentions, be productive of evil, what might it not effect when used as a tool by crafty and ambitious teachers? Besides which, the mere alteration or omission of a single word might change the whole design of a traditionary law, and lay the foundation of a most dangerous error.

During the second century, a variety of doctrines and ceremonies were introduced into the Christian worship, by certain of the fathers, who claimed a personal acquaintance with the Apostles, or with those who had been their intimate associates. These opinions and practices, coming recommended by persons thus honoured, had considerable weight; and resting upon their verbal testimony, were received as *simple tradition*. In process of time, when it had become uncertain with whom these things originated, or when their general adoption rendered an appeal to personal testimony needless, they passed under the name of *ancient*, and *secret tradition*: but it was not until the close of the third, and the beginning of the fourth centuries, that they received the imposing title of *apostolic tradition*.

Tertullian mentions tradition, as the authority upon which many rites were performed in his

day. “ Now to begin with Baptism. When we come to the water, we do there (and we do the same a little before in the whole congregation) under the hand of the pastor make a profession, that we renounce the devil, and his pomps, and his angels. Then we are plunged three times in the water ; and we answer some few words more than those which our Saviour in the Gospel has enjoined. When we are taken out of the water, we taste a mixture of milk and honey, and from that time we abstain a whole week from bathing ourselves, which otherwise we use every day. The sacrament of the eucharist, which our Lord celebrated at meal time, and ordered all to take, we receive in our assemblies before day : and never but from the hands of the pastor. We give oblations every year for the dead, on the day of their martyrdom. We account it an unfit thing to keep any fasts on the Lord’s day, or to kneel at our prayers on that day. The same liberty we take all the time from Easter to Pentecost. We are troubled at it, if any of our bread or wine fall to the ground. At every setting out or entry on business, whenever we come in, or go out from any place ; when we dress for a journey, when we go into a bath ; when we go to meat, when the candles are brought in ; when we lie down, or sit down ; and whatever business we have, we make on our foreheads the sign of the cross. If you search in

the Scriptures for any command for these, and such like usages, *you shall find none.* Tradition will be urged to you as the ground of them; *custom* as the confirmer of them; and our religion teaches to observe them." *

This quotation affords an affecting proof of the fatal influence of tradition; and the farther we pursue the subject, the more shall we be convinced that it was not the design of Christ that any part of his worship should be regulated by rules derived from oral testimony. To expose the folly of adopting any practice recommended by such authority, we need only take a view of some of the customs to which it gave rise.

The sign of the cross in Baptism, observed at the present day by the principal ecclesiastical establishments, was in general use in the days of Tertullian and Cyprian. The former says, "The flesh is washed, that the soul may be unspotted; the flesh is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated; the flesh is signed, that the soul may be fortified." And the latter declares that "they only can be saved who are regenerated, and signed with the sign of Christ." All this Basil and Austin defended, in the fourth century, on the authority of *apostolic tradition*.

The consecration of baptismal water, as still

* See Wall's History of Infant Baptism, part 2. c. 9.

practised in the Greek and Roman churches, was an early ceremony. Tertullian mentions it, and Cyprian says, “the water must first be cleansed and sanctified by the priest, that it may, by his baptizing in it, wash away the sins of the man that is baptized.” In the following age this consecration was considered an *apostolic tradition*.

The anointing of the baptized with oil is thus noticed by Tertullian; “When we come out of the laver, we are anointed with a blessed ointment, according to the ancient practice, by which men used to be anointed for the priest’s office with oil out of a horn.” Cyprian says, “The baptized person must also be anointed; that by having the chrism, or anointing oil, he may be the anointed of God.” This ceremony was confirmed by the council of Laodicea, which decreed in their forty-eighth canon, that “baptized persons must after their Baptism receive the holy anointing.” Basil, Austin, and Ambrose plead for it as the universal custom of the church, received by *apostolic tradition*.

Imposition of hands, renunciations, and exorcisms, were all considered as essential parts of Baptism by the ancients, and were observed with great exactness. Tertullian remarks, “When we enter into the water we profess the faith of Christ in the words of his law; we protest with our mouth that we renounce the devil, and his

pomps and his angels." Origen, about 30 years after says, " Let every one of the faithful remember when he first came to the waters of Baptism, when he received the first seals of faith and came to the fountain of salvation, what words he then used, and what he denounced to the devil; that he would not use his pomps, nor his works, nor any of his service, nor obey his precepts." And after Infant Baptism had crept into the church, the same ceremonies accompanied it, as appears from Tertullian's objection to it, and from what Austin asserts, " That infants do profess repentance by the words of those that bring them, when they do by them renounce the devil and his works." These things were practised and defended on the ground of *apostolic tradition*.

Immersing the baptized three times, and giving them a mixture of milk and honey when they came out of the water, were customs of early origin. In addition to these, there were prayers for the dead, oblations to the martyrs, bowing to the east, the superstitious observance of times and seasons, as Easter, Whitsuntide, &c. All these were defended by Cyprian, Jerom, and Austin, as ancient and universal rites of the church, founded upon *apostolic tradition*.

It is among these customs, let it be remembered, that we first meet with *Infant Baptism*,

and its appropriate appendage infant communion. We cannot but think that the time when this practice began, the ceremonies which accompanied it, the principle upon which it was performed, and the authority by which it was supported, prove it to be an episcopal innovation. The first Pædobaptists did not appeal to the Scriptures for their authority, nor have they given us the oral testimony of any of the Apostles; their refuge is a secret and undefined tradition. How unaccountable is this circumstance in relation to a ceremony of such supposed importance! Has it any parallel in the history of Scripture ordinances? Did any institution come from God, and the church not know how, or by whom it came? If any of the Apostles had enjoined the Baptism of babes, certainly some of the primitive fathers would have known which of them, and would have recorded the particulars of the fact: but no such fact is recorded — and strange to say, this mighty Babel of popular superstition can boast no higher authority than the most degrading rites that disgrace the annals of popery. Like them it is derived from tradition, and like them must sink into oblivion, when tradition shall give place to the written testimony of God!

It may perhaps be contended, that the authority of tradition is still good, though many practices ascribed to it are confessedly erroneous;

and that the abuse of any principle is no argument against the principle itself: but if it can be proved, that apostolic tradition was not sufficient to direct the church even in the second century, we cannot consider it competent authority in the nineteenth; and to do this, we need only refer to the controversy between the eastern and western churches, respecting the time of keeping Easter. The Asiatic churches celebrated that festival on the fourteenth day of the moon of March, on whatever day of the week it happened, while the western churches observed it on the Sunday following the full moon. Both parties pleaded the custom of their predecessors, and the authority of apostolic tradition. The bishops of the Asiatic churches said they derived their tradition from John and Philip. The bishop of Rome and his adherents professed to have received theirs from Paul and Peter. This dispute, in which fathers were opposed to fathers, and tradition to tradition, began at a very early period, even while some were living who had seen the Apostles. If it was so difficult *at that time* to decide the peculiar circumstances of a public festival, how shall we, in this age, select from the great mass of traditionary laws any one, and invest it with apostolic authority! Who will undertake to assure us, which is the genuine apostolic enactment, Episcopacy or Pædobaptism? The Independents reject the former, and retain

the latter, but by what rule do they thus decide, for if tradition be an infallible directory, it ought to be obeyed in all things — if it be not infallible, its authority should be excluded from the church of Christ. The question then is — do the Independents believe the infallibility of this tradition by which they defend Infant Baptism? If they do, let them act according to their belief, and where are they? — within the pale of the Romish church. If they do not believe it, of what value is its authority in support of their practice, and what becomes of Pædobaptism?

When there is strong evidence against the truth of a principle, it is extremely hazardous to make that principle a guide in divine worship; especially when God has given us a written testimony so definite and perspicuous. To leave this unerring rule, for that tradition which has been the refuge of early innovators and modern papists, is to follow the example of Esau, who sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage.

It is impossible to look into the history of those numerous by-laws which have passed under the name of apostolic traditions, and mark their inconsistency, the contradictory nature of their testimony, and the many absurd and idolatrous rites to which they have given birth, without being struck with the subtle policy of that arch apostate who has ever sought to subvert the

purity of the Christian worship, by destroying the authority of the word of God. To this end he has induced the minds of thousands to attach a far greater importance to human inventions, than they do to divine institutions; and has thus too successfully infused into that religious constitution of things which has assumed the name of Christianity, the leaven of an idolatry which, though less gross in its aspect, is not less destructive in its consequences, than that under which he has caused the nations of the earth to groan for so many ages. “My kingdom is not of this world,” was the plain unequivocal answer which our Lord gave to the inquiry of Pilate; and the wise maxim he laid down to guide his disciples in all things pertaining to the worship, the constitution, and the government of his church.

Had this maxim, so strongly indicative of the spirit and genius of Christianity, been strictly observed by his followers in succeeding ages, the Christian religion would still have retained in its forms and worship, that scriptural simplicity which constitutes its chief beauty and excellence. But no sooner did they begin to consult the splendour, rather than the purity of the church; and to accommodate the principles of the Gospel to the pride and prejudices of men, than they opened a channel for that amazing torrent of corruptions, which has in its wide and desolating course swept away the ordinances of God, and

left in their room the dregs of a depraved and superstitious theology.

The numerous evils resulting from this false step are to be traced in all their magnitude in the ecclesiastical establishments of the present day; where we see the ordinances of Christ superseded by the inventions of men, and the interests of religion sacrificed at the shrine of worldly grandeur. The Hierarchy, as it is called, whether it exists under the form of a papal, or of an episcopal jurisdiction, possesses all the essential features of a secular dominion. Founded in a policy and supported by a power which are directly opposed to the spirit and design of the New Testament, it has been a source of heavy calamities to the church of God, as well as an instrument of ambition and avarice, contention and revenge to a corrupt and venal priesthood.

In what form, or at what precise point of time the spirit of innovation first encroached upon the liberties of the church of Christ, and brought it under the bondage of a secular dominion, cannot be determined at this remote period, since no department of ecclesiastical history is involved in greater obscurity than that which relates to the introduction of human rites and ceremonies into the worship of God. But thus much we may justly conclude, that as the advocates of these rites have grounded them on tradition, that tradition itself is the grand mean which the great

Heresiarch has employed for the purpose of corrupting the doctrines, changing the ordinances, and destroying the purity of the church of God.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE DESIGN OF BAPTISM.

IN the preceding chapters we have endeavoured to lay before the reader a candid and faithful statement of our sentiments respecting the Nature, the Mode, and the Subjects of Christian Baptism. We shall, therefore, now proceed to inquire into the design and signification of this New Testament ordinance.

In addition to the body of critical and historical evidence that has been produced in favour of *Believers' Baptism*, we may plead its perfect agreement with the scriptural design of the ordinance. Positive institutions are signs, deriving their use from the end they prefigure ; there must necessarily therefore be a similitude between *them*, and the objects which they are intended to represent—for as Austin remarks : “if sacraments bear no resemblance to the things, of which they are sacraments, they are no sacraments at all.” As the design which God had in view in the appointment of positive ordinances, is only to be

gathered from an attentive regard to what is revealed concerning them : the laws of their institution should be our guide respecting their true meaning : nor are we at liberty to administer such ordinances for the purpose of accomplishing another design, any more than we are to set aside, or to alter the ordinances themselves. Baptism is a positive institution --- Baptism then has a precise and important signification ; and if we appeal to the New Testament, we shall find that it was intended to be an expressive emblem of the great doctrines of our faith.

That any alteration in the mode of administering the ordinances of the Gospel, destroys the analogy between them, and the things which they are designed to signify, is evidenced in the Romish communion. Christ appointed bread and wine to be taken in remembrance of Him --- the bread to be broken, as an emblem of his body broken for us, and the wine to be poured out, as an emblem of his blood shed for our sins.* But what resemblance is there between the wafer of the church of Rome, and the broken body of Jesus Christ ? Baptism likewise has a spiritual signification ; it is an emblematical representation of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection --- and of the believer's death unto sin and resurrection to newness of life ; but if we substitute sprinkling for immersion, what similitude is there

* 1 Cor. ii. 24, 25, 26.

between the sign and the things signified? May we not say in this, as in the case of Romish communion, that the scriptural design of Baptism is entirely lost.

This is so obviously true, that there are few among the Pædobaptists that have any definite idea of the end which the ceremony answers. And how should they, since there is no correspondence between the sign, *as they practise it*, and the things signified by the ordinance instituted by Jesus Christ. It is upon this principle alone, that we can account for the ignorance and contradiction which prevail among the great body of Christian professors respecting the design of Infant Baptism; and this has led Papists, Episcopalians and Independents, mutually to recriminate each other, on the ground of some alleged absurdity in their respective views of this subject. Can this be said of us? Are we at a loss to give a scriptural reason for our conduct? Are we divided in opinion respecting the design of Baptism? No — nor do we on this account assume to ourselves any superiority of judgment or of perception, for it is the result of adhering to the command of our Lord, and observing the law of his institution: indeed the analogy between Baptism and the things signified by it, is so plain and intelligible, that it is readily recognised by all who practise it in its primitive simplicity.

In considering the design and signification of Baptism we observe —

1. That it is a solemn act of divine worship, in which the persons baptized profess their faith in that great mystery of revelation — the *Triune Jehovah*.

The words which our Lord commanded his disciples to use in the administration of Baptism, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” are not a mere form to grace a ceremony, but exhibit an important truth—a truth which constitutes the basis of the Christian revelation, and the only foundation of our hope — *the Triune Jehovah*. To baptize therefore in the name of the sacred Three, is to baptize in the faith of that doctrine the belief of which forms the distinguishing mark between the Christian and the Deist. “Ye believe in God,” said our Lord, “believe also in me.”* And this faith must be produced by the Holy Spirit, for “no man can say (εἰπεῖν), declare or testify that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”† In the ordinance of Believers’ Baptism, as in the whole of the New Testament, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are represented as executing respective parts in the economy of human redemption, and are recognised by the believer in their several offices: “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”‡ And we have fellowship with the Holy Ghost; “the Spirit

* John xiv. 1.

† 1 Cor. xii. 3.

‡ 1 John, i. 3.

itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.”* The persons whom we baptize, *sincerely desire* to attend to this ordinance from a conviction, founded on an examination of the New Testament, that it is their duty to follow the Lord in the way of his commandments. They publicly avow their faith in the one living and true God — their subjection to his authority, and their willingness to devote themselves to the service of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The administration of Baptism to *believers* accords with the design of Christ, and with the meaning of the words which he prescribed. They are baptized in the *name of the Father*, and thereby acknowledge one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all. They are baptized in the *name of the Son*, and thereby acknowledge that he is equal with the Father, the Lord of life and glory, the Redeemer of his people, and that they receive him as prophet, priest and king. They are baptized in the *name of the Holy Ghost*, and thereby acknowledge him in all his offices, as the teacher, sanctifier, comforter and preserver of the elect. Thus the Baptism of believers is an act of worship in which they profess faith in the one God—Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and solemnly devote themselves to the service of the triune Jehovah. Can this be said of infant sprinkling? What declaration of faith, what acknowledgement of God in Christ, what

* Phil. ii. 1. 2 Cor. xiii. 14. Rom. viii. 16.

demonstration of the Spirit's work is there in this ceremony? Surely Pædobaptist ministers cannot even affect to use our Lord's words as expressive of the faith of those whom they sprinkle, because they are not of age to receive the testimony of revelation — neither can they presume to believe that all, or even the greater part of them will hereafter embrace this testimony. Do they not then adopt them as a *mere form* without any regard to their relative importance or emblematical signification? and would it not be right in them to consider how far such conduct is consistent with the solemnities of religion.

2. The Baptism of believers is an outward sign of the work of the Holy Ghost in regeneration.

To be baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, is to profess that we are the subjects of his regenerating power. Baptism was strictly enjoined upon all who were born of God, and in the days of the Apostles they faithfully obeyed the command; hence in after-times some mistook the sign for the thing signified, and considered the ordinance as regenerating the subject. This error, which at an early period, had an extensive and fatal influence, is still maintained by the great majority of Pædobaptists. In our view, Baptism is a symbolical representation of the new birth, and so far from its having any regenerating efficacy, we think that no one has a right to be born of water, who has not been previously born of

the Spirit. To receive Christ's ordinances is to profess that we have received Christ, and that we acknowledge him as our Lord and master — no man can do this, that is not born of God, therefore regeneration must precede faith, even as faith ought to precede Baptism. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."* "To as many as received him, believing in his name, he granted the privilege of being children of God, who derive their birth not from blood, nor from the desire of the flesh, nor from the will of man, but from God."† This work of grace is also necessary to a just apprehension of the nature of Gospel ordinances, "for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual discerneth all things."‡ Our Lord himself insisted upon this truth in his discourse with Nicodemus; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot discern the reign of God."§ This spiritual change is the spring of every act of faith and obedience; and it is our only title to the ordinance of Baptism. If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his; and if he be not Christ's, he can have no right to his institutions. We find in

* 1 John, v. 1.

† John i. 12, 13. See Dr. Campbell's Translation.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

§ See Dr. Campbell's Translation.

the New Testament that they who were washed, or baptized, were also sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God.* And are said to be saved by the *washing of regeneration*, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.† The *persons whom we baptize* profess to have experienced that renewing of the Holy Ghost, of which this washing is a significant emblem — hereby declaring that they have put off concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness: but the *unconscious subjects of Pædobaptism* know nothing of the agency of the Spirit on their hearts, and the sign, *as administered to them*, fails altogether of illustrating the work of regeneration, of which primitive Baptism was undoubtedly a symbolical representation.

* 1 Cor. vi. 11.

† Dr. Macknight renders it the *bath of regeneration*, and has the following remarks upon this passage. “*Through Baptism*, called the bath of regeneration, not because any change in the nature of the baptized person is produced by Baptism, but because it is an emblem of the purification of the soul from sin. Hence Ananias, in allusion to the emblematical meaning of Baptism, said to our Apostle, (Acts xxii. 16.) ‘arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.’ Be baptized in token of thy resolution to forsake thy sins. The real change in a believer which entitles him to be called a Son of God, is not effected by Baptism, but by the *renewing of the Holy Ghost* mentioned in the next clause. Hence our Lord, whom the Apostle has followed here, joined the two together, in his discourse to Nicodemus; John iii. 5. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” See Notes on Titus iii. 5.

3. Baptism is designed to illustrate the purifying nature of the blood of Christ. The Scriptures proclaim the entire pollution of man, and the absolute necessity of the blood of Christ to remove his guilt. Baptism by immersion is a striking illustration of these important truths—the persons whom we baptize profess to feel a deep and humbling conviction of their utter sinfulness, and they desire to be washed in the laver of Baptism, as a lively emblem of their having been washed in the fountain which is opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. It is on account of its symbolical meaning, that we find Baptism so frequently spoken of as taking away sin—Peter, when addressing those Jews, who were converted under his ministry, commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins;* not that he believed, that the application of water to their bodies could remove their moral defilement; but because Baptism exhibits an impressive image of that purification by the blood of Christ, which they enjoyed through faith in his name. This he shews in his epistle, where he says, “when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. To which water, the antitype Baptism, (not the

* 1 Acts ii. 28.

putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), now saveth us also through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”* The death of Christ for the sanctification of his people, is more forcibly set forth by immersion than it can be by any other mode. Our highest idea of natural purification arises from an immersion of the whole body in water; surely, therefore, this mode must be the most appropriate figure to illustrate the purity of the saints, who are said to “be washed from their sins in the blood of Christ.”† Sprinkling might be a suitable representation of that imperfect purification which obtained under the law, but it by no means expresses the sanctification of believers under the Gospel, of whom it is said, that “Christ gave himself for them that he might sanctify and cleanse them with the *washing of water* by the word.”‡

That Baptism was designed to be an emblem of the sanctification of believers through the blood of Christ, is a truth admitted by Pædobaptists. Dr. Boys says, “the dipping in holy Baptism has three parts; the putting into the water, the continuance in the water, and the coming out of the water. The putting into the water doth ratify the mortification of sin by the power of Christ’s death, as Paul — “Know ye not that all

* 1 Peter iii. 21. See Macknight’s Translation.

† Rev. i. 5.—vii. 14.

‡ Eph. v. 25, 26, 27.

we, which have been baptized into Jesus Christ, have been baptized into his death, and that our old man is crucified with him?"* The continuance in the water denotes the burial of sin; to wit, a continual increase of mortification by the power of Christ's death and burial.† The coming out of the water, figured our spiritual resurrection and vivification to newness of life, by the power of Christ's resurrection."‡ Tilenus also observes, that "the ceremony in Baptism is threefold: immersion into the water, a continuance under the water, and a rising out of the water. The internal and essential form of Baptism is no more than that analogical proportion of the signs, already explained, with the things signified. For as it is a property of water to wash away the filth of the body; so it represents the power of Christ's blood in the cleansing from sin. Thus immersion into the water declares, by the most agreeable analogy, the mortification of the old man; and emersion out of the water the vivification of the new man."§ Thus, according to Pædobaptists themselves, our mode is the only one that is consistent with the scriptural meaning of the ordinance.

4. Baptism is a lively emblem of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

As these truths constitute the only foundation

* Rom. vi. 3.

† Rom. vi. 4.

‡ Dr. Boys' Works, p. 294. Edit. 1629.

§ See Booth's Pædo. Exam. Vol. i. p. 185.

on which our hope is built, they form prominent parts of the Gospel revelation, and it is evidently the design of Baptism to present us with an emblematical illustration of them.

When our Lord submitted himself to this ordinance, his immersion in the water typically represented his death and burial; his rising up out of the water, and the Spirit resting upon him, strikingly prefigured his resurrection from the dead, his ascension to the throne of his glory, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, as the first fruit of his intercession.

The element in which he was immersed was an emblem of that dreadful abyss of divine justice in which he was overwhelmed; and like a drowning man, he sunk under the waters of deep affliction — “ Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul: I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.”* In the prospect of this woeful scene of distress, his soul being in an agony, he exclaimed, “ I have a Baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!”

The Baptism of believers also is designed to keep in view the important facts of the sufferings and triumphs of the Son of God. This the Apostle clearly shews — “ Know ye not, that so

* Psalm lxi. 1, 2.

many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by Baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”*

And again, “Buried with him in Baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” These expressions, *buried with him in Baptism* — *wherein ye are risen with him* — so decidedly favour immersion, that independent of the signification of the ordinance, they are of themselves sufficient to decide the *mode*. Bishop Hoadly declares that if Baptism had been performed by the Apostles, as it is now by the Pædobaptists, we should never have heard of this form of speech.†

But it is asserted by some in our day, that we labour under an egregious mistake respecting the meaning of this passage—for that the Apostle is not speaking of the *mode*, but of the *design* of the ordinance—which is the death and resurrection of Christ; and that so long as *this design is kept in view*, pouring or even sprinkling is as valid as immersion. *That man* must be strangely

* Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5.

† See his Works, vol. 3. p. 890.

warped by prejudice, who will venture such an opinion, in opposition to the plain meaning of the words, and the universal consent of the most able expositors.* But in point of fact, the Apostle is not only speaking of the emblematical relation of Baptism to the death and resurrection of Christ, but also of the obligations it imposes upon the baptized — he therefore necessarily refers to the mode, as exemplifying the ends which should follow, in the believer's life and conversation. He says, we are *buried in Baptism* and are *raised up again*, that we should walk in newness of life. Here the *mode of Baptism* is specified, and the end which should succeed it pointed out; and we trace without difficulty the analogy between the sign and the thing signified — but what emblematical representation does sprinkling afford of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? What sign does it exhibit that the infant is dead unto sin and alive unto God? Would he not remain for ever a stranger to the fact of his having received this ceremony, unless told of it — how then can it furnish him with motives to future holiness of life?

The spiritual signification of Baptism is so entirely obscured by the substitution of sprinkling in the place of immersion, that many learned

† See Grotius, Whitby, Macknight, Hammond, Burkit, Dr. Wells, all of them Pædobaptists, on this subject.

Pædobaptists have been of opinion that immersion should be restored. No one has expressed sentiments more decided on this subject than Dr. Wall: he says, “The immersion of the person (whether infant or adult) in the posture of one that is buried, and raised up again, is much more solemn, and expresses the design of the sacrament, and the mystery of the spiritual washing much better, than pouring a small quantity of water on the face: and that pouring of water is much better than sprinkling, or dropping a drop of water on it.”* Again, when addressing the clergy, he says; “To those who use sprinkling instead of dipping, or even of pouring water (which last is enjoined by our church even in the weakest child’s case), I would humbly represent the consideration of the duty of obedience which they owe, not only to the rulers of the church to which they have promised to conform; but also and chiefly to *our Saviour himself, whose word of command is, Baptize*. I wish they would study the notion and emphasis of that word. We are forced to some pains in defence of our practice against those who pretend that it does necessarily and absolutely include dipping in its signification—I think we must not, and *cannot deny* that it includes washing in its signification. They will do well to consider whether they shall be able to justify

* See Defence of Inf. Bap. p. 405.

before our Saviour, that a drop, or a sprinkle or two, of water, can be so fairly understood to be a washing of a person, in his sense.” * Venema maintains that “washing is neither the only, nor the principal idea connected with the ordinance; but more truly that of suffocating, and of producing death on the flesh, seems to be intended, not only as an effect which water produces, but because the Apostle asserts it in express words.” †

This opinion is also maintained by that eminent biblical critic, Schleusner. When stating the metaphorical signification of the expression *συνθαπτεσθαι τῷ Χριστῷ*. To be buried with Christ, he says; “The origin of this singular mode of speaking, which is peculiar to the books of the New Testament, must be sought for in Baptism, which in the apostolic churches was performed by immersion. For submersion, which was formerly used in Baptism on account of its similitude to a burial (because the whole body of the person baptized, which was immersed in water or a river, was as if buried in a sepulchre), not only had this signification, that it might represent the death of Christ; but by the same symbolical rite the baptized were understood to profess and to promise, that they were willing in future, after the likeness and resemblance of

* See Defence of Inft. Bap. p. 407.

† Venemæ Dissertat. Sac. 1, 2. c. 14. sect. 9.

the death of Christ, to renounce all wickedness ; and even to suffer death for the sake of the Christian religion, as Christ gave up his life for the sake of the truth : and as the body which was immersed in water at Baptism, again emerged or was raised out of the water, by this symbolical rite was represented the resurrection of Christ, the hope of the future resurrection of the dead ; and men were admonished that the whole purpose of life should be regulated by the doctrines and examples of Christ.” *

Thus are our opinions and practice defended by learned Pædobaptists ; very many of whom maintain, as firmly as we can, that Baptism is intended to exhibit the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ ; and that *immersion is absolutely essential to the symbolical representation of these facts*—with what propriety this is denied by the advocates of Pædobaptism at the present day, it remains with them to shew—it is something in our favour, that we have the testimony of the most eminent of their body on our side in this particular.

5. Baptism is intended to illustrate the believer's spiritual conformity to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That spiritual change, of which only the believer is the subject, and which constitutes him a new creature,† is prefigured in the ordinance of

* Vide Lex. Nov. Test. sub voce Συμβαπτω.

† 2 Cor. v. 17.

Baptism; “for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.” Here the Apostle shews that Baptism was the outward sign of spiritual conformity to Christ; and the whole of his reasoning in the 6th chapter of Romans is founded on this union and communion of believers with Christ. He begins by saying that *we are dead to sin*, and that *we are buried with Christ by Baptism into his death* — being thus dead and buried with Christ in Baptism, *we are free from sin.*” * He then proceeds to point out our spiritual conformity to his resurrection, and our consequent communion with him in newness of life. “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” † The great mystery of our union to Christ is here unfolded — *He*, as the head of the body, and the first fruits of them that sleep, is represented as having comprehended all the elect in the death and resurrection of his body; and *they*, by their interest in his vicarious sufferings, are represented as dying in his death, and rising in his resurrection — his death being a complete

* See verses 2. 4. 7.

† See verses 8, 9, 10, 11.

satisfaction for their sins, and his resurrection the certain pledge and pattern of their own. Here also we have the mystery of the Christian life explained. *That life* which we live by the faith of the Son of God, and which is said to be hid with Christ in God. The Apostle describes it as consisting of two things — dying unto sin, and living unto holiness.

Our *dying unto sin* is prefigured in our being immersed in water; “ye are buried with him by Baptism, likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin.” This expression may not only signify our freedom from the dominion of sin that we should no longer live under it; but our having endured the punishment due on account of it, by virtually suffering and dying with Christ as our great surety. Thus all the elect were included in Christ’s death, and his death was imputed to them as though they had suffered the penalty which the law enacted, and they are consequently regarded as just in the sight of God, “for he that is dead *δεδικαιωται* is justified from sin.”*

Again, *our living unto holiness*, is prefigured by our rising out of the water; “that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Baptism is an apt illustration of these things;

* Verse 7.

and the subjects of this ordinance confess that they were born in sin, and that they were the willing servants of iniquity; but that they have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.*

6. Baptism prefigures the death of the believer's body, and his resurrection to eternal life.

We have shewn that Baptism is an emblem of death — of the death of Christ for the sins of his people, and of the believer's death unto sin: we shall now shew that it points to the final dissolution of the body. In this view of the ordinance it possesses indeed much practical utility, teaching us that we must shortly lay aside this frail and degraded tabernacle, which is so opposed in the tendencies of its very nature to the enjoyments which the spirit seeks in communion with Christ. “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” The believer sees in Baptism a lively figure of the putting off his earthly tabernacle — he realises in this ordinance, the burial of his body in the dust of the earth, when the indwelling of sin will be destroyed, and he will be for ever freed from all

* Col. iii. 10.

those corruptions which at present war against his soul — “for he that is dead is free from sin.”

Having thus passed through death in a figure, he is taught the necessity of praying and watching with all perseverance — he is stimulated to activity in the ways of the Lord; to the diligent performance of all his revealed will — to the patient endurance of the afflictions of his righteous providence; and he lives in the habitual expectation of his last change; having his loins girt about, his lamp burning, and his hope in exercise that he shall be found of *his Lord* in peace!

The believer's descent into the water at Baptism does not more forcibly exhibit the humiliation of his body when he shall return to his original dust, than his rising again out of the water prefigures the final and complete victory which he shall obtain over death in the morning of the resurrection, by virtue of his union to Christ.

We have the sentence of death in ourselves, our bodies must undergo a change before they can participate in the joys of the heavenly world; but our future felicity is not the less secure, because the circumstances of our nature require that our flesh should see corruption. He who hath enstamped his image upon the hearts of his people, will also set his seal upon

their graves ; and will give his angels charge to watch their sleeping dust ; and he shall call in the morning and they shall come forth with joy and singing ; for “ he will have a desire to the work of his own hands.”

Does the ordinance of Baptism exhibit these important and consolatory truths ? Does it evince our faith in the Triune Jehovah — does it set forth the work of the Spirit and the purifying efficacy of the blood of Christ — does it illustrate his bitter sufferings, deep humiliation, and complete triumph over sin and death — does it enforce a spiritual conformity to his example — does it prefigure our death, and direct our hopes to that blissful period, when these bodies shall rise to immortality in the perfect likeness of their Redeemer ? What manner of persons then ought *we* to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, who profess to believe these truths, to enjoy these privileges, and to anticipate this blessedness !

While we conscientiously observe this ordinance, as an act of our Lord’s divine authority, and an evidence of his consummate wisdom and goodness — while we zealously defend it from the false glosses, which the ignorance of some, and the perverse reasonings of others, have cast over it — let us be solicitous to deduce from it for ourselves, at least some of the many spiritual lessons it is designed to teach us — and since we

know by experience, that while we practise it in scriptural simplicity, even Pædobaptist professors will unite with men of the world in branding us with reproach—let us endeavour to adorn our profession, by the consistency of our walk and conversation;—to cherish and exercise those graces which are the brightest ornaments of the Christian character;—to enjoy the consolations the Gospel is calculated to afford, and to wait in patient expectation of ultimately beholding the glory of the Triune God,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

THE END.





